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OR,

The Wild West Detective Among the Crooks.

BY EDWARD L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF THE "DEADWOOD DICK" AND
"DEADWOOD DICK, JR.," NOVELS, "DEN-
VER DOLL," "SIERRA SAM," "YREKA
JIM," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

DEADWOOD DICK'S RESOLVE.

"WELL, Dick, what's the news?"
The question was asked by one of two occu-
pants of the office, or rather, the reading-room

THE HANDSOME CAPTAIN OF THE BURGLARS STARED AT THE DEFIANT GIRL IN
ASTONISHED ADMIRATION.

Perfect Rubber Stamps,
T. S. S. & P. ROW,
NEW YORK, N. Y.

of the Girard House, in the city of Philadelphia. It was Rats, the boy ferret, who spoke, and the person addressed was Deadwood Dick, Junior.

The latter was seated by the window, engaged in perusing a morning paper, while the boy had just come in from a stroll.

Dick looked up from his paper, as he replied: "No, there is nothing special, so far as concerns us, I guess."

"Then, I suppose you will be starting on West, to-night?"

"No, I shall not start West, yet. There is one matter I want to give a little investigation, before I go."

"And what is that?"

For answer, Dick pointed to an article, in the paper he had been reading.

It was headed:

"THOSE BURGLARS,"

in display type, and then he went on:

"That section of the city, north of Girard avenue and west of Broad street, and principally populated with well-to-do people, is literally under a reign of terror."

"It is now nearly two months since that locality became the prey of as daring a gang of burglars, as the city has ever known."

"So frequent have become their depredations, that residents stand in fear of retiring at night, lest when they awaken, they will find their homes sacked of their valuables."

"Only last night, the palatial residence of Honorable Hoyt Hylton, of Oxford street, was entered, and an elegant silver service secured. An attempt was also made to enter the burglar-proof safe, where Hylton keeps his money and the noted Hylton diamonds, which are worth a fortune."

"Now, though our large and disciplined police and detective forces claim to have worked heartily in this matter, they have not as yet so much as scored a point toward ferreting or capturing the burglars."

"Such an efficient force of men ought to bring out better results. If they are incapable of doing so, why don't our City Fathers send for detectives from other cities?"

"The gang must be broken up. It is a disgrace to our great city that they have been allowed so long to ply their nefarious calling."

"We have a list of names of prominent citizens, who are ready to make up a handsome purse for the man who shall be instrumental in breaking up this gang. To which sum, we, the publishers of this paper, will add an elegant medal."

"Now, then, detectives, go in, and show us what you can do!"

Rats, who, like almost all street gamins had learned to read, he scarcely knew when or how, perused the article with keen interest.

"Ho!" he exclaimed, "this is a circus, to be sure. So you're goin' to take a hand in it, boss?"

"Perhaps."

"Bully for you! I'm with you, you bet! Anything to break the mernoterny of a town like this. Why, it's as solemn here as a funeral all the time. What's yer programme, Mister Dick?"

"The first thing to do is to interview the chief of police. That may set my mind's locomotive in motion. Once it gets up steam, we'll go in to win."

"But, ef these Phila cops hev been two months workin' on the case, without hittin' a p'int, how are we strangers goin' to git on, when we don't know I from ibex 'bout ther town?"

"Oh! we'll git there just the same," was the confident reply. "While I am out, I want you to get a city Directory and hunt up the number of Hoyt Hylton's street address."

Dick at once started for the City Hall, and soon was in the chief's private office, where that official was seated, in company with two other gentlemen.

The chief was a burly, pleasant-faced man, who seemed well-fitted to command a large force of men.

Next to him sat a plain-appearing, middle-aged gentleman, who looked as if he might be a merchant.

The third of the little party was a very tall man, of faultless physique, dark complexion, and with hair and beard as black as jet. His age was about forty-five.

He was fashionably dressed, and from general indications, was a person of wealth.

The chief of police gave the new-comer a searching glance as he entered.

"Good-morning, Mr. Bristol," he said pleasantly, taking the proffered hand; "be seated. From your card I infer that you are from the West?"

"Well, yes, that has been my stamping-ground until a short time ago."

"So you are a detective, eh?"

"That has been my chosen profession for several years past."

"Just so. Mr. Bristol, I make you acquainted with two of my friends. The gentleman on my right is Deputy Sheriff Parks. The gentleman on my left is Mr. Hoyt Hylton, retired commission merchant."

The parties respectively acknowledged the introduction, and the chief went on:

"I suppose you are East on business pertaining to your profession, sir?"

"Well, no, not exactly, although I have attended a few cases while here. My real object in coming was to visit some of the principal cities, to study into Eastern ways and customs as contrasted with Western life and people. As it has happened, my trip has turned out both pleasurable and profitable, and I have gained a great deal of valuable information."

"I was to start westward to-day, but an article in a morning paper temporarily caused me to change my mind and pay you a visit."

"Yes! Well, sir, what is there I can do for you?"

"That remains to be seen. I came to chat with you concerning this gang of burglars. I presumed you might be able to give me a few points."

"I would be glad to do it, sir; but to tell the truth, I haven't any points myself, in the matter, nor have any of the force. The case is a most puzzling and provoking one. For two months all the police and detective forces have been actively trying to ferret out and capture the offenders, but all to no avail. It is evident that they are a most artful and skillful gang, whom long experience has made cunning adepts, and invulnerable to capture."

"I don't agree with you on the *invulnerable* part," Dick declared. "There are just as smart men on the detective force as these self-same burglars, and if you will grant me your personal official co-operation, I have a plan by which I can find out who these night-robbers are, and work the total breaking up of their ranks."

That the stranger was in dead earnest and meant what he said, all present well understood.

CHAPTER II.

DICK'S SCHEME.

DEADWOOD DICK's confidence appeared to strike the chief of police in a humorous way, for he smiled broadly.

"You?" he ejaculated, incredulously.

"Yes, I—I, individually, and collectively. You will, of course, co-operate with me in the carrying out of my plans, but I alone, with my detective partner, 'will do the work.'"

"This is utter nonsense," the chief declared. "How on earth do you, with but one aide, expect to do what a hundred others have failed to accomplish?"

"Two men, and even one, can often accomplish more than many. When the villains see that they have a large army to contend with, they are more strategic and wary; they act with excessive caution; but when they find only a small party to contend with, they will grow bold and incautious, and thus will be the easier to discover and catch."

"Well, there is good sense in your argument; so, go on and give us your plan of operation. If good, of course I shall be glad to see you through."

"My plan or plans must positively remain a dead secret between you, myself and my aide, until the trap is ready to spring, for then a few trusted persons must necessarily be let into the secret. For," continued Dick, "were even a hint of my scheme to come to the hearing of these burglars, the effort to secure them would be totally frustrated, and my life would not be worth the drop of a pin. So, when you are alone, at a later time, we will review the matter more fully."

And Dick arose to depart.

"Hold on! hold on!" both the deputy-sheriff and Hoyt Hylton cried, rising. "Do not let the private conference be disturbed on our account, as we were going to take our departure anyhow, only having dropped in for a friendly call. By all means, hold the consultation, and it is to be hoped that it will result in the breaking up of this lawless band."

"As for you, Mr. Bristol, if your plans work successfully, permit me to assure you that I will personally make you a present of a handsome recompense."

Dick thanked him for his generous offer, and then the two men took their departure.

"Now, then, sail in and spread yourself, be-

fore some other caller arrives," the chief urged; "I am all ears and a willing hearer."

"Well, I don't know that there is any particular spreading to be done!" Dick replied.

"Here are my plans in a nutshell. Such a bullabaloo has been made over these burglaries, and the officers are so vigilant, that the burglars are always on their guard, and prepared for any emergency. If we succeeded in locating their headquarters, they of course would be prepared for escape."

The chief nodded.

"Undoubtedly. Such rogues are as wary as foxes, and would not neglect to prepare an avenue for escape in case their den was raided."

"Exactly; and therefore, before any attack is made, all their secrets, as well as their place of refuge, should be known to us. So, to secure this information, it will be necessary for me to join the gang!"

The chief stared, in amazement.

"You join the burglars?" he ejaculated.

"That's what I said!" Dick replied; "and here is my plan: In the first place, too late in the day for me to have a police court hearing before the next morning, I am to be arrested by one of your special officers, on suspicion that I am so-and-so, a notorious housebreaker and convict, of Chicago, and additional suspicion must be expressed that I am directly or indirectly identified with this Philadelphia gang. See?"

"Go on!" the chief commanded, his interest on the increase.

"Well," the young stranger pursued, "I will of course be locked up to await a hearing. In the mean time you must work the newspapers, and have them come out with big head-line notices of the capture of probably one of the most notorious burglars of modern times."

"Humph! I don't see what you're driving at, yet!" the chief declared.

"You will, directly," was the reply. "The newspaper articles will not only attract the attention of the respectable class but will also be read with avidity by all the crooks, whose eyes they meet, and they will be only too eager to get a look at the king-pin burglar, so that a crowded court room is assured."

"But, what has this to do with your joining the burglars?"

"Well, in this way: When I'm brought before the judge, or magistrate, whichever the case may be, no one is to appear who is able to identify me, and I will be discharged, or at least you can fix it that way. After that, it will be a comparatively easy matter for me to pick up an acquaintance among the crooks, who will be eager to learn if I really am the notorious Mr. So-and-So. See?"

"Yes. By Jove! the plan looks feasible, but, whether you can make it work or not, is a question. What name will you adopt?"

"The name I shall give in court will be Jake Short, of Louisville, Kentucky. As for the name of the suspected burglar, I'll leave that for you to determine."

The chief reflected.

"I have it," he said, finally. "About the most notorious cracksmen of Chicago, is Pete Plummer. Young as he is he has already done a term in Joliet State's Prison, and one in the Columbus, Ohio, Penitentiary. But he don't look like you except in form. He is as swarthy as an Italian, with hair and eyes of about your color, but has a brick-red mustache! This one peculiarity has frequently got him into trouble."

"Oh! There will be no difficulty about my making up so as to resemble Mr. Plummer," Dick assured, with a light laugh. "I am quite an adept at disguise."

"But, my young friend, you must be aware that this arrangement will bring you into great danger. Suppose you succeed in getting into the confidence of these very burglars by the method suggested, and also succeed in obtaining a membership, are you not aware that, if your identity and purpose should be betrayed, your life would be the penalty?"

"Oh! of course. But that's nothing. In the last seven years of my experience I have stood face to face with grim death a dozen times, without the ghost of a chance of escape; yet, here I am, alive and well. If I were to narrate to you the history of my career, you would set me down either as a lunatic or the biggest liar this side of Denver."

"But, let that pass. Enough to say that when I undertake a case I go at it regardless of personal consequences, and I have yet to be told of a single case of detective work in which I did not succeed!"

"Well, Mr. Bristol, all I have to say is that if you are what you represent, you are a most

remarkable young man. I have such faith in your plan, that whatever assistance I can be to you is yours to command."

"Thanks. But, you understand, what I have told you is to be a profound secret."

"Exactly. When do you propose to put your plan into execution?"

"I am not prepared to say as to that. I shall want to prospect a little at first, to get the lay of the land. As soon as I'm all ready I'll call upon you."

"Very well; do so. What part in the game is your partner going to play?"

"I have not yet decided. I shall find something for him to do. He's only a kid, but smarter than many a grown person. By the way, Mr. Hylton's house was burglarized, eh?"

"Yes, but Hylton is able to stand the loss, and don't mind dollars as much as you or I would cents."

"He is rich, then?"

"Yes; rated among the millionaires. The Hylton jewels, bequeathed him by his brother-in-law, Da Costa, are estimated to be worth over one hundred thousand dollars, you know."

Dick, of course, didn't know, but he took it for granted that such was the case, and bidding the chief good-day, left the office.

CHAPTER III.

THE STORY OF THE JEWELS.

"WELL, so far, so good," Dick mused, as, after leaving the chief of police, he made his way leisurely up Chestnut street, toward Ninth. "It's a dangerous undertaking, and perhaps a foolish one, but I'm going to try, sure's my name is Dick Bristol. I've already made a name for myself, in New York and Boston—why not in Philadelphia? This promises to be a fat paying job, too, if I can carry out my plan successfully."

"I wonder what sort of a man this Hylton is? I couldn't help but notice that his piercing gaze never once left me, when he was in the office. Was he suspicious of me? or didn't he like my interest in this burglar case?"

"His words on leaving, discountenance such a supposition. Nevertheless, it may be of advantage for me to know more of the gent than I do at present."

Reaching the hotel, Dick found Rats waiting, with the Oxford street number of Hoyt Hylton's residence, of which the detective made a memorandum in his note-book, and that afternoon he visited the office of the newspaper which had published the article already quoted. There, after formally introducing himself, he received a list of the names and addresses of the people who had suffered by the depredations of the burglars.

And quite a list it was, too.

Dick then proceeded to the vicinity of Hoyt Hylton's residence, which he found to be a handsome sandstone villa, of modern architectural design, set down upon a smoothly-shaven, terraced lawn.

Dick did not apply for admission to this residence, but sought a little cigar-shop in the vicinity kept by a buxom, good-natured looking woman of middle age.

Purchasing a cigar, and lighting it, the detective leaned leisurely against the counter and struck up a conversation, which was not hard to do in that case.

"This is Mrs. Fielding, I believe?" he casually observed.

"Yes, sir," was the answer.

"Been long in this neighborhood?"

"Oh, yes. Henry and I started this little place years ago, long before this locality became so well as it is now. Henry is a laboring man, you see, and by attention to business we always contrived to make ends meet, without owing any one a red cent. Since the rich folks have crowded into this neighborhood and made it high-toned, we've been offered good sums to give up the little place, but we won't do it. We are doing fairly well, and love the little store that helped a long way toward giving us a prosperous start in life."

"You are right. A happy home is ever to be cherished, be it ever so humble," Dick replied. "None but those who have one know how to value it properly. Do you know the Hyltons, who reside in this neighborhood?"

The good woman shrugged her shoulders.

"I know of them, but that's about all," she replied. "They're a queer set at the best, all except little Haidee, who is a sweet young lady, far different from her high-headed, arrogant father."

"How many are there of the family?"

Mrs. Fielding reflected a moment.

"Well, there's Hylton himself," she said,

"and Ham—that's his son, and a wild one he is, too. Then there's Haidee, the daughter, and Don Da Costa, the coachman, a son of Hylton's brother-in-law, whom Hylton claims to have taken into his employ, out of pity. There's quite a curious history linked with this family."

"Indeed? Would you mind giving me an insight into it, for I have reason to be somewhat interested."

"So? Well, I haven't an over lot to tell, but if what I know will prove interesting you shall have it, in welcome."

"Years ago, when Hoyt Hylton, wife, son, and his (Hoyt's) sister, settled in this neighborhood, the sister, a charming girl, married a man named Delos Da Costa, who was possessed of a fine education, and was a person of unusual intelligence and strength of character. Nevertheless, he did not succeed in business, and after some twelve years of married life, leaving his wife only sufficient means to support herself and two children for a year, he set forth for other parts in quest of fortune."

"He traveled extensively, with varying luck. Whenever he had any money he sent it home. Finally he was heard of as a colonel in the Austrian Army; later, as a prospector in the South African diamond fields. After that nothing was heard of him for over a year, when a vague rumor reached this country that he had perished on the African frontier."

"By this time Mercedes Da Costa, his wife, was reduced in circumstances to the point of starvation. She had her two children, Donald, aged fourteen, and little Royal, whom his playmates nick-named 'Rats,' aged twelve. Donald is the one who is now Hoyt Hylton's coachman."

Deadwood Dick started when he heard the nick-name Rats mentioned, but held his own counsel, and allowed the cigar-vender to go on.

"Well," Mrs. Fielding proceeded, after drawing a long breath, "Mercedes was at last, when nearly driven to take her bed from hard work and poor food, obliged to apply to Hoyt Hylton for assistance."

"Hylton has ever been characterized as a hard taskmaster and miser, since I first knew him; but, when she so piteously begged of him to save her from having to go to the poor-house, he told her if she would put away her children, so that they would be no incumbrance to her or him, he would give her a place in his home as a domestic."

"With no alternative left, she was at last compelled to make the sacrifice. She succeeded in getting Don into a boys' boarding school, to do chores for his board and what education he was allowed time to pick up. Little Royal was adopted by a French lady, but he was a stubborn youngster, and growing sick of his place, ran away, and that's the last that's been heard of him."

"How old would these two brothers be, now?"

"Eighteen, and sixteen, respectively. But, to go on with my story: About a year after Mercedes had been established in her brother's home, a letter reached her, from Australia, coming from her husband, whom she had mourned as dead. It stated that, while in South Africa, Da Costa had succeeded beyond his wildest expectations; that, besides a snug sum of money, he had secured diamonds, large and small, worth in the American market fully a quarter of a million dollars. He furthermore stated, that, a week before the date of his letter, he had shipped the jewels, in a sealed package, to America, addressed to his wife, in care of her brother, Hoyt Hylton, as he did not know his wife's present address. As for himself, he should start home in two weeks' time. I myself saw this letter, and can vouch for what I am saying."

"Well, what was the upshot of the matter?" asked Dick, who had of course become greatly interested.

"The diamonds reached here, in safety, and were taken charge of by Hylton, in whose care they were addressed. Mercedes made a demand for them, but the brother refused to give them up until Colonel Da Costa arrived to lay claim to them. This naturally worried her greatly."

"Finally, after several weeks, two letters came. One was for Mercedes, the other for her brother. Both were post-marked San Francisco, and the letter was signed 'Hutchinson Higgins,' a man who traveled with Da Costa considerably, I believe."

"The letter stated that Colonel Da Costa had died on shipboard, while en route from Melbourne for Frisco, and had been buried at sea. He had, however, left a sealed package in Higgins's hands, to be brought to Philadelphia, the package containing his will, and a sum of

money, which Higgins said he would bring, in person, in a short time."

"What was contained in Hylton's letter, he refused to disclose, but he immediately left town, and was gone for several weeks. When he returned, it was with Higgins and the package—or, at least, a package. Next followed a formal opening of the package, in the presence of Mercedes, two lawyers, and Hoyt Hylton."

"Well, to make a long story short, the package contained a document, purporting to be Delos Da Costa's will, and five thousand and five hundred dollars in money. By the terms of the will, Mercedes was to receive five hundred dollars, and one hundred dollars was to go to each of her sons. The balance of the five thousand dollars, and the diamonds, were willed out and out, to Hoyt Hylton."

"Of course the matter created a sensation among those who heard anything of the affair, but they were few, for Hylton was rich and influential, and caused the gossip to be speedily hushed up."

"How about Mercedes?"

"Poor thing! The blow drove her crazy, and she was packed off to an asylum. She did not remain long, however, for she was only mildly demented—had simply lost her mind. Nothing of the past does she now remember, and insists that she is the discarded daughter of Queen Victoria. She does not remember Don, nor me—for I was a good friend to her. Whenever I meet her, I try to get her to come and stay with me, the few years she has yet to live, but all to no avail."

"Where does she live?"

"That is more than I can tell you. She wanders about the city, and ekes out a living as a rag-picker, and purchaser of cast-off clothing. Although only forty years old, she is thin, consumptive, and gray-haired, and you'd take her to be over sixty."

"And Don lives with Hylton?"

"Yes. He has been there some three months, now. I say he lives there, but it would be more correct to say he only works there. He eats with the cook, sleeps over the stable, and, as I hear, is treated with far less kindness and civility than any of the rest of Hylton's employees—except by Haidee, who is a little mad-cap, anyhow, whom even her father can't manage when she takes it into her head to be unruly. She declares she likes no one so well as Donald, and it would do me good to have her run off and marry him, just out of spite on Hylton, whom I thoroughly despise. And, you know, it's quite the thing, nowadays, for a girl to elope with her father's coachman!"

And here the voluble storekeeper laughed, heartily.

"Such matches seldom terminate happily," Dick responded. "It is four years since Don and Royal have met each other?"

"Yes, or a trifle over!"

"They ought to recognize each other, if they met, now."

"I should think so. Why?"

"Well, I am not prepared to say *why*, just yet. Let me assure you, my dear Mrs. Fielding, that I am deeply grateful for what you have told me, for, as a detective, I have taken the deepest interest in the story!"

"Ah! are you a detective?"

"Yes!"

"But, you seem so young!"

"Young in locks, mayhap, but older even than my years, in experience. I have a few more questions to ask you, and then I must be going. What was the name of the woman who adopted Royal Da Costa?"

"Lagrange."

"Did Mercedes live in this city, before going into her brother's employ?"

"Oh! no. She lived over across the Delaware, in Camden, New Jersey. Do you know anything of little Royal, sir?"

"I am not prepared to say for certain, but I fancy I do. It may be I can restore the brothers to each other, and it may be I can do more. To tell you the truth, Mrs. Fielding, I have my doubts about the genuineness of that will which Hylton produced!"

"And I share your doubts, sir, as do many others."

"It does not look likely Da Costa would literally disinherit his own wife and children whom he loved, and leave Hylton those jewels?"

"No, sir."

"Well, now, you say nothing of what you have told me, to any one, until I see you again. I am going to look into this matter, to satisfy my curiosity, if nothing more. Where would I be likely to find this man, Hutchinson Higgins?"

"That's more than I am able to tell you, sir. The last I heard of him, he had got to be a bum, and frequented the lowest slums of the city."

"And you have no idea where I might run across Mercedes?"

"Well, no—that is, not for a certainty. I have most frequently found her down along Front street, Delaware River. I suppose she gathers in a plenty of refuse there, that gives her a living. It wouldn't do you any good to hunt her up, for she would only laugh you in the face, and tell you she was heiress to the throne of England."

"Well, I must be going, and now again thank you for what you have told me."

"Oh! not at all. It's an open story to me, and Hylton knows I know it, and that's why he hates me and Henry; and that's why he offered a real-estate agent ten thousand dollars to buy us out of our cosy little home. Pshaw! Hylton couldn't have this place under any consideration!"

"Bravo! I admire your grit!" Dick said. "So good-day!"

"Good-day, sir. You will call again?"

"Certainly."

"For I would like you to meet little Miss Madcap—I mean Haidee. I know you will like her, for she is the soul of good-nature, and as unsophisticated as a rustic lass. She comes over here and chats with me, daily."

Promising to call soon, Dick took his leave.

He had not given Mrs. Fielding his name.

He had reason for not doing so.

CHAPTER IV.

"RATS," THE BOY OF GRIT.

It was in rather a peculiar state of mind, to say the least, that the Wild West Detective made his way back, down-town.

He did not venture to pay a visit to the Hylton mansion, as he had first intended, for, before he again saw the millionaire, he wanted to put his "thinking-machine" into active operation, and deliberate over the situation.

One thing in particular occupied his mind: Was the boy "Rats," now in his employ, and Royal Da Costa, likewise nicknamed "Rats," one and the same person?

If so, Dick's youthful *protege* had not given a correct version of his history.

But why had he not? What had been his object in withholding any facts from his benefactor? This was what Dick could not understand.

"I'll bet I'll find out," he muttered. "What a precious close-mouthed kid he is, to be sure."

When the detective reached the hotel, he found Rats seated in the office, reading a novel, in which he appeared to be deeply engrossed, for he did not notice Dick's approach until addressed:

"Hello, Rats! Are you ready to start for New York?"

"I'm generally ready for anything," Rats replied. "Why, boss, what is ther racket now?"

"The racket is, that I don't think I have any further need of your services."

Rats stared in anxious surprise.

"Why, what's the matter?" he demanded.

"I haven't done anything wrong, have I?"

"Yes. You have deceived me in regard to yourself, and I cal that wrong. When I first met you in New York, you told me your name was Rats. I asked you what your real name was, and you said you didn't have any, and that you were brought up in the streets; furthermore, you did not know who your parents were. Now, boy, I have found out that you told me a deliberate lie."

Rats winced and looked ready to cry, but made no answer.

"Another thing," Dick went on, "when we arrived in Philadelphia, I asked you if you had ever been here before, and you positively declared you had not."

"Neither I had, sir!" Rats averred, his eyes flashing with spirit.

"But you lived with your mother only across the river, in Camden?"

"That don't make no difference. I never was in Phila till now, unless it was when I was too young to remember. Don't try to make me out too much of a liar, boss, for it goes ag'in' my grain. I don't know that I've harmed you, and if you don't want me any longer, say so, and I'll go back to New York."

"Then you acknowledge that you are Royal Da Costa?"

"Well, what of it, if I am? I've allus been called Rats, and probably allus will be!"

"But you must have had an object in not revealing to me who you really were?"

"So I did. You see, it was this way: Dad went off to furrin parts to make some money, an' tuk sick an' died. Mom struggled along fer awhile, but finally got so hard up that she had to give up housekeepin' and go out as a servant. So she sent Don, my brother, off to school, and bound me out to a mean old Frenchwoman, named Lagrange."

"I didn't like this a bit, 'cause I was willin' to earn my livin' by sellin' papers an' blackin' boots, like other kids did. But, mom wouldn't have it, and so old Lagrange gobbled me up."

"She was meaner than skim-milk, an' made me do all the dirty work, an' I didn't get half enough to eat. So one night I slid out an' hoofed it all the way to New York. On the way I got several little jobs of work to do, and when I got in New York, to start in business on my own hook, I had just two dollars and forty cents."

"I immegetly bought out another kid's boot-blackin' outfit, and went to work, and 'twixt shines an' sellin' papers, I made out furst-rate. I stuck to that till I met you. When you begun quizzin' me about my name and folks, I reckoned as how you were lookin' fer a feller o' about my size to take back to old Lagrange, so I didn't give ye no satisfaction. So there you've got it, fac' fer fac', and now, I reckon, I'll go back to New York an' start inter bizness ag'in, fer I ain't afeard to work."

"Oh, I guess you won't be in no hurry about going back to New York," Dick replied, good-naturedly.

"Why won't I? Who's goin' to hinder me?" the boy demanded, half-angrily.

"I am, Royal Rats. I reckon you and I won't dissolve partnership yet awhile, even if you are worth the half of a quarter of a million."

The boy looked astounded.

"A quarter of a million!" he ejaculated. "Get out! What you givin' us? If national banks were sellin' for a cent a gross, I wouldn't be able to buy a brick o' one. Say, what you drivin' at, anyhow? How d'ye happen to know so much about me?"

"Well, listen attentively, and I will tell you," Dick answered, and then went on, in a deliberate way, and told of his visit to Mrs. Fielding, and explicitly narrated all that he had learned there, not neglecting a single particular.

Rats listened with great interest, until Dick had finished. Then he said:

"Well, I guess that woman told you correct, tho' o' course I don't know what happened after I was bound out, for I have never seen or heard from mom since. So Don is workin' for Hylton, hey?"

"Yes. I suppose you will want to go and see him, eh?"

"Oh, I dunno. I an' Don never used ter hitch very well. He was an overbearin' sort o' rooster. But, jest the same, I could lick him every day in a week an' twice on Sundays, an' I did him up brown jest the day before I saw him last fer callin' me a lazy loon, an' sayin' I wouldn't never amount to nothin' more'n a tramp. Phew! but *didn't* I baste him, tho'!"

"You are brothers, and you should allow no unfriendly feeling like that to exist between you."

"Well, I hain't got nothin' partic'lar ag'in' him, 'cept that he counts himself a peg better than I am. I reckon a detective stands a notch or so over a coachman, an' so I reckon I an' Don will be just as good friends as ever, and there will be less gore spilt, if we each hoe our own row, and keep out of each other's chicken-coop."

"Well, you're an odd one," Dick observed. "And I suppose it's your own business as regards associating with your brother. So suit yourself."

"That's what I intend to do. Say, what are you goin' to do about this will business?"

"Nothing at present, until I get better posted. For the present I shall look up the burglar racket, as there is a prospect of more money in that. As I shall have little or nothing for you to do in that direction, I'll give you another job. I want you to search the city over in quest of your mother. She is known as Mercedes, the Queen rag-picker. When you locate her and her abode, communicate at once with me."

CHAPTER V.

HOW THE SCHEME WORKED.

DURING the next two days only two events transpired that have any bearing upon our

story, one of which was that Dick and Rats changed their place of abode to a private boarding house on Green street, above Broad; and the other, another depredation of the burglars, in the northwestern part of the city, where they succeeded in capturing nothing of particular value.

On the third day, Dick sent the following message to the chief of police:

"Pete Plummer will be at the corner 8th and Vine streets, this afternoon, at four o'clock. R. B."

And, at four o'clock, a striking-looking individual stood at the northwest corner of Eighth and Vine streets, near what used to be the entrance to Johnny Clark's Olympic Theater.

He possessed a graceful yet athletic figure, which was habited in a very loud suit of clothing, including a shiny silk hat, sealskin-trimmed overcoat, and patent-leather shoes. He carried a gold-headed cane, and a brilliant diamond sparkled on his shirt bosom.

His face was dark as an Italian's, his eyes and hair of a dark-brown color, but his lip was adorned with a mustache of light-brick color, which gave to him a most peculiar appearance. Otherwise, he would not have been a bad-looking fellow.

While he puffed leisurely at a cigar, his time seemed preoccupied in gazing at the fair female shopping element, which daily throngs Eighth street, from early morn till late at night.

Although he was stared at by all passers-by, he appeared totally oblivious of the fact that he was attracting attention, until he felt a heavy hand clapped upon his shoulder, and wheeled around, to find himself in the clutches of a burly cop, who towered full a head above him!

"Hello! Plummer, what in thunder are you doing here?" the officer demanded.

"My name's not Plummer, sir!" was the reply. "You've made a mistake in your man!"

"Well, I reckon not! Once seen, you're not easy forgotten, Peter! It's been two years, now, since I saw you last—that's when you got out o' Joliet prison, after servin' out a two years' term for burglary—but, you look just as natural as ever. That red mustache o' yours is a sure landmark o' yer phiz. I say what are you doing here in Philadelphia? Chicago gettin' too hot for you?"

"I tell you my name is not Plummer, I never was in Joliet, nor Chicago, nor did you ever see me before!" the accused man retorted. "My name is Jacob Short, and I belong in Kentucky."

"Get out! You can't give me any such guff as that. So come along, for I'll have to run you in. You're too hard a character to be layin' round loose!"

"I won't go!"

"Won't, eh? We'll see about that!"

Then there was an apparent struggle, in which the policeman came out victorious by securely handcuffing his man.

By this time a curious crowd had collected, that nearly blockaded the street, but the officer succeeded in marching his prisoner off, followed by a strangely-assorted mob of curious urchins.

To the Central Station Deadwood Dick was escorted, for, as the reader is aware, the red-mustached stranger was our detective in disguise.

On the way to the station the policeman said: "By Jove, young man, you've got a nerve!"

"How do you mean?" Dick asked.

"How do I mean? Why, I refer to this game you're playin'. If you succeed in breakin' up that gang o' burglars, you'll be a Jim-Dandy, and no mistake."

"Oh! you're on to the racket, eh?"

"Yes. The chief had to let me into the secret. I'm the only one on the force who knows a thing about it."

"What's the prospect o' my getting off in the mornin'? Perhaps the judge will see fit to hold me, to await news from Chicago?"

"Oh! that will be fixed. You see, I am a special from Central Station, and I am now taking you there. In the morning you get a hearing. When you are called up there will be no one to prefer a charge against you, as I shall be off of duty for a day or two, you see. No charge being against you, they can't hold you."

"But, maybe I'll be held until your return?"

"No. That is not customary, unless when a prisoner is incarcerated, he is charged with a criminal offense."

In due time the Central Station was reached, and Dick was taken before the lieutenant on duty, where the arresting officer stated that the prisoner was Pete Plummer, a notorious ex-convict from Chicago, and had been arrested on

suspicion that he was identified with the recent burglaries in the Quaker City.

Dick was then locked up for the night.

"Well! here I am!" he soliloquized, when he was left alone, "as snug as a bug in a rug, though this bench don't look very much like a feather-bed. I got in here easy enough, but the next question before the house of representatives is, am I going to get out as easy? It would be a fine note if they would convict me on suspicion and send me up for three or six months. I guess the chief will fix it all right, however."

Nothing was left for the prisoner but to stretch himself out upon the hard bench and wait for the next day to come.

It was a long, long wait, for sleep was out of the question, owing to the racket kept up between two prisoners in an adjoining cell.

Morning at last dawned, however, but it was after ten o'clock when an officer came for Dick and conducted him to a police court, where he was immediately arraigned.

After the customary preliminaries, the court began:

"What is your name?"

"Jacob Short."

"Where do you belong?"

"In Louisville."

"What is your business?"

"In spring, summer and fall, I am a book-maker at the races. In the winter I buy and sell horses."

"The charge against you is that you are Peter Plummer, an ex-convict from the prison at Joliet, Illinois, and that you are a notorious house-breaker. What have you to say?"

"I deny the allegation. I am not guilty."

"When were you in Chicago last?"

"Never in my life. Nor was I ever in jail, at Joliet."

"Clerk of Court, order Officer Hohn to step forward."

"Officer Hohn is not present," said the officer who had escorted Dick into court. "He has obtained a leave of absence on account of sickness."

The judge surveyed Dick, critically, a moment, before he spoke:

"Have you any proof to produce, to verify your statement concerning yourself, sir?" he asked.

"Unfortunately I have none with me. I am a stranger here."

"Ahem!" and the judge wiped his glasses.

"You may be all right, but Officer Hohn, who arrested you, and who formerly belonged to the Chicago force, being absent, I will hold you in three hundred dollars bail, to await further examination."

This announcement caused Dick's spirits to fall, but outwardly he was unchanged.

The court officer was about to conduct him from the room, when an unexpected interference occurred—unexpected, at least, to Deadwood Dick.

A tall, elegantly dressed man, of five-and-thirty years, stepped forward—a handsome fellow, with a pleasant face, brilliant eyes, and, as the ladies would say, a very love of a mustache.

"Your Honor," he said, "may I say a word in this matter?"

"Certainly," was the reply.

"My name as you will see by this, my business card, is Julius Bauman, junior partner of the drygoods firm of Myers & Bauman, Louisville. The prisoner, Mr. Jacob Short, I know well, he having been in our employ several years as bookkeeper, until several years ago he entered the business of speculating on races. He is well-known in Louisville, and his honor and integrity stand unblemished. So if bail is needed, in this unjust case, I will go the security."

"Do you own property here, sir?"

"I do not, but rather than see Mr. Short locked up, I will deposit the bail in cash."

The judge seemed more mollified by this statement, and after a moment's reflection said:

"Well, I guess that is not necessary. If you are a man of the large business which this card signifies you represent, I hardly believe you would care to commit perjury in a case like this. The prisoner is therefore discharged."

This change of verdict caused a murmur of surprise throughout the court-room.

As for Julius Bauman, he turned to Deadwood Dick with a smile.

"Come along, Short," he said, pleasantly. "It's a lucky thing I chanced to drop in here this morning."

Wonderingly, Dick arose, and followed his handsome rescuer from the room.

For once in his life he was thoroughly non-plused.

Who was this stranger?

Was he Julius Bauman? If so, what motive prompted him to come to the rescue?

Or was he—was he an agent of the burglars?

CHAPTER VI.

WHEREIN DICK RECEIVES INSTRUCTIONS.

TOGETHER the two men left the police court in silence, and it was not until they were a full block from it that either spoke.

Then Bauman clapped his hand familiarly on Dick's shoulder, and said:

"Plummer, you had a narrow escape!"

"Yes, it did look rather off color for a time, until you came forward," Dick acknowledged. But, say, who the deuce are you?"

Julius laughed.

"Kind of a surprise to you, eh?" he queried. "I should remark!" Dick replied, for he had already taken the cue.

His rescuer was a crook, and Dick's ingenious plot had signs of being successful.

"I guess you never saw me before?" Julius next observed.

"Not to my knowledge. I allow, however, that you are not Julius Bauman, of Louisville, for I was never there in my life. Moreover, I don't know where you ever saw me."

"Well, it's not altogether sometimes safe to talk over business matters on the street, but if you will accompany me to my studio we'll come to an understanding."

"Correct. You have befriended me, and you can bet Pete Plummer, alias Plum Pete, never forgets a kindness."

"No need to tell me that!" Julius returned, heartily. "Your record bears evidence of that. Rascal though you are, you've always had the reputation of being white. And if report be true, and I don't doubt but what it is, many a poor family has cause to thank you for temporary assistance!"

Only with difficulty could Dick keep a straight face. It was one of the strangest of all his experiences, to hear himself thus lauded for his charitable deeds, by a professional crook!

Nevertheless, if Julius spoke the truth, and there seemed no reason to doubt but what he was candid in his statement, Dick could but admire the perhaps one noble trait of the jail-bird he was impersonating.

Very little more was said until the two reached an abode in the southwestern part of the city, in order to reach which, they had to take several lines of street-cars.

The abode in question, was an ordinary-looking four-story brick house, with marble steps, a peculiarity for which the Quaker City is famous.

Inside, however, all was different, particularly in the grand parlor, into which Dick was conducted.

Here was literally all that money and art could procure, in the way magnificent and luxurious furnishings, and elegant adornments.

It was akin to a wonderland to Dick, and he really felt somewhat awed, at the superb surroundings.

He and Julius became seated at a table, and the latter touched a silver call-bell, in response to which, a nattily-attired colored waiter made his appearance.

"A bottle of Piper Sec," ordered Julius. It was soon brought, opened, and then the two men were again alone, with two glasses of sparkling champagne in front of them.

"Now, we will talk!" Julius remarked. "My name is not Julius Bauman, at all. Whatever my real name may be, you can call me Captain Fisk. This house belongs to my wife, and is a resort for all cultured gentlemen who like to engage in a game of chance. In this business, however, I have no interest. I'm leader of a party of men, who are engaged—and very profitably, too—in an entirely different line of trade. I saw you, two years ago, in Chicago, when you were sentenced to imprisonment for two years at Joliet, for burglarizing old Payn's house. I observed, at the time, how coolly you took your dose, and says I to myself—'That fellow will never die of grief through being locked up! I afterward made inquiries about you, and learned that you were one of the most expert cracksmen west of New York. I never forgot you, on account of your dark complexion, and funny red mustache.'"

"Well, last night, while I was up-town, I met one of my boys, and he showed me an article in an evening paper, containing your capture, and said: 'Cap, go get that man out. He's sharper than chain-lightning, and the very man we want, for a certain job!'"

"I had no need to be told this, for I knew your record like a book. So I went to police court, this morning, prepared to bail you out, if it cost a thousand dollars. So there you have it all in a nutshell, and here we are!"

And then the handsome captain took time to swallow his champagne, at a gulp, in the mean time eying Dick, triumphantly.

While as for Richard, he looked highly elated. "You're a corker!" he declared. "There's no porous-plasters on you, I'll swear! and you can bet I appreciate your kindness. But, say, how about that Bauman card?"

The captain smiled.

"The Faculty—that's what we call ourselves," he said, "own a printing press, as it often becomes necessary to have various sorts of business cards, letter-heads, and so forth, as a matter of introduction. In an hour's time you can have a letter of recommendation on the letter-head of almost any prominent business man in the country, as we keep a printer and engraver for that purpose. For instance, supposing you were to want a job in any particular part of the jewelry business, a recommend on one of the letter-heads of Tiffany and Co., New York, would go far toward getting you an eligible situation, whereby you might do something profitable for The Faculty. See?"

Although really amazed at the cleverness of this accomplished rascal, Dick betrayed no surprise.

"Well, you're a dandy!" he said. "I thought I wasn't over slow, but you knock me silly. But don't you have some difficulty about the correctness of signatures?"

"Oh no! A letter of casual inquiry about some matter will generally bring back the signature of the party addressed, after which a duplicate is easily made."

Dick bowed acknowledgment; then there was a brief silence, broken by the detective.

"Do I understand that your object in getting me out of hock was to secure my services?" he asked.

"Well, yes—to secure—both co-operation and services. Your varied and checkered experience ought to make you the very man we want. You have, with a couple of exceptions, been very successful in the biz, and ought to be rich."

"But I am not. Sporting life has reduced me to a pretty low financial status. Still, I am able to keep my head above water. I must say, however, that I have not yet quite tumbled to your business. Very possibly, it may be somewhat out of my line."

"Oh! no, not all. It hits you to the queen's taste. Have you been in town long?"

"Several days."

"Do you read the newspapers?"

"Thoroughly."

"Perhaps, then, you may have noticed an article in one of the papers concerning the operations of a certain party of gents in the north-western part of the city?"

"You refer to the burglaries?"

"Yes."

"I read the article."

"Then, enough said. Are you prepared to join us?"

"Well, I don't know but I might, if there's any money in it. The fact is, I'm getting pretty well down toward hardpan, and must scare up some money somehow."

"All right. We shall be only too glad to get you as a member," the captain declared. "I cannot say how long we shall remain in this city. We are liable to have to light out at any minute, for, between the cops and the infernal newspapers, it's getting pretty hot for us. If we do leave here, we shall probably swoop down on New York or Brooklyn."

"How many are there of you?"

"You will make six. Now, in regard to your joining us, it will be necessary for you to change your appearance: at least, you will have to dispense with that mustache."

"Oh! I can fix that, all right."

"Well, then, be ready by to-morrow night, at nine o'clock. At the corner of Sixteenth and Mount Vernon streets, you will find a hansom waiting. Approach the driver, and say 'Faculty,' then get in the conveyance, and you will be brought to our place of rendezvous. Knock on the door six times, at intervals of about two seconds apart, and we will know that you are Number Six. Then, follow your guide. Be prompt as to what time you reach the hansom, as we gauge our operations. We shall to-morrow night hold a pow-wow, so to speak, and discuss a job which must be done at once."

"Correct. I'll be on time," Dick assented.

They remained but a short time longer, and then the detective bade the handsome Captain

Fisk good-day, and took his departure, not forgetting to note that the house he had visited, was No. —, Gray's Ferry Road, not far from the Schuylkill River.

CHAPTER VIII.

RATS PURSUES AN INVESTIGATION.

IN the meantime, where was Rats?

Deadwood Dick had, before leaving him, given specific directions that he make an effort to find his mother, Mercedes, the queen rag-picker.

Just how to go about it, was not apparent, but the boy made up his mind to do his best.

"Spec I might as well look for needle in a haystack!" he mused. "This Philadelphia kivers a big space, I've hearn say, and I reckon it would take me a year ter go all over it. However, as the boss wants the s'arch made, I'm nominated walkin' deligate, and I'll see the matter through. Can't say I'm purtic'ler 'bout drummin' up acquaintances wi' mom again, perwidin' she's crazy, fer I ain't sorter got over feelin' sore, 'cause she bound me out to that old French rip!"

Making his way down-town, he tramped through Sansom street as, judging by the grimy appearance of the houses, they were tenements, peopled by folks in the lower walks of life, among whom Rats hoped to find some one who could give him information about the well-known rag-picker.

And he was not disappointed, in this. He had gone but a couple of blocks, when he espied a rag and junk-man trundling a two-wheeled push-cart through the street.

Overtaking him, the following conversation ensued:

"Say, mister," Rats began, "may I ax you for a little information 'bout the rag business?"

"Vot you want to know?" was the gruff demand, the Teuton eying the boy, suspiciously. "Vy you want to know apoud dot rag pizness? You haf some old clothes you want to sell?"

"Well, no, I reckon not. This happens to be the only set o' togs I've got, and I can't very well spare 'em, this kind o' weather. What I want to know is this: I am lookin' for a woman rag-picker who has come into some money. She is a relative of mine, and I would like to find her, and it occurred to me you might know something about her. If you can give any idea where I can find her, I will give you a dollar."

The Dutchman's eyes snapped, when he heard this.

"Id vas a vinmens, hey?" he queried.

"Yes. Her name is Mercedes, and she ain't quite right up here?" And Rats touched his forehead.

"Oh! I see! She vas oud her head mit her prains off. Yaw! I know dot vomans!"

"Then you're the very man I want to see. Where does she live?"

"I gif dot up!"

"You must have some idea where she hangs out!"

"No, I don't vas know anyt'ings apoud dot. I vas afraid mit dot voman, und I keep oud of where she vas in my way. She vas grazy like der tuyfel!"

"Pshaw! She is harmless. Well, if that's all the news you've got, good-day!" and Rats turned to depart.

"But, see here, mine frient!" interposed the anxious merchant. "You don'd vas gif me dot dollar, yet!"

"And I don'd was goin' to, Dutchy, till you pan out some more information. What you've told don't amount to a cent, and if you want the dollar, you have got to tell me where I am most likely find the woman!"

"Yaw. Put I can't not dells you vat I don'd vas know."

"Where do most of the rag-pickers dispose of their rags?" Rats demanded, an idea occurring to him.

"Vel, der vas blenty of blaces," Dutchy replied. "I does mine pizness mit dot Misder Stein, down py dot Second and Market street. He do von big pizness. Maybe you find oud there. I haf seen her around dot neighborhood, alretty, sometimes."

Seeing it was practically useless to try to get anything more out of the Dutchman, Rats gave him the dollar, and then hurried away, to hunt up Mr. Stein's place of business.

It was easily found, on Second street a few doors from the Market, and as his informant had explained, it was an establishment of large proportions. Owing to its immense factory interests, Philadelphia is a great center of trade for the paper-rag business.

By making inquiry at the office, Rats was re-

ferred to the purchasing foreman, a pleasant-faced man, named Stern.

As soon as the lad made known his business, the foreman smiled.

"Oh! yes, I know her," he admitted, "and she's an expert at her business, too. She brings in double the amount of stuff any of the others do, and she's mighty sharp on a bargain, if she ain't exactly right in the cupola. Her one hobby is, that she is a discarded daughter of Queen Victoria, and will soon succeed to the throne."

"Yes; that's the woman!" Rats said, eagerly.

"Now, can you tell me where she lives?"

The foreman shook his head.

"No; I am sorry to say I can't. I never asked her. It is likely, however, that she lives in some bleak garret, where she has to pay little or no rent, for she's too stingy to pay much for a room."

"Don't you know of some one that does know where she lives?" Rats queried.

Stern reflected a moment, and then called a rough-looking boy who was engaged in sorting rags.

"Say, Duffy, d'ye know where old crazy Mercedes lives?"

"Reckon I do!" Duffy replied. "She's got a dandy place down in St. Mary street. No fear o' her not goin' ter heaven. She can darn near reach up thar now, fer, ye see, she lives in the sky parlor in dad's tenement. Have to climb up three stairs and a ladder to git thar, an' go thr'u a trap door. She likes the place 'cause she kin sleep over the trap o' a night, an' no one can't git in the room. In winter time she hes to sleep on the floor wid her legs drawn up, 'cause ther room ain't big 'nuff fer to stretch 'em out. In summer she makes her bed on a box, an' let's her feet hang out the windy."

And after vouching this piece of remarkable information, Mr. Duffy turned to go back to his work.

"Hold up, there!" Rats cried, checking him.

"What's the number of your house?"

"What der ye want ter know fur?"

"I wish to see this Mercedes."

"Well, young feller, the place is jest above Seventh street. Any bloke kin tell ye which is Duffy's. But, let me give ye a tip on one thing. If ye don't want'er everlastin'ly get scalded, don't go nosin' 'round that loft. The old hen allus keeps a kettle o' scaldin' water to entertain her callers with, an' she never fails to use it. That's her!"

And then Mr. Duffy walked away.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BURGLARS' "BUREAU."

THAT night, the appointed hour found Deadwood Dick at the place Fisk had announced that a hansom would await his appearance.

The weather had changed within a few hours, and the rain was coming steadily down.

Fortunately Dick had donned a rubber coat and cap, and so the weather had no terrors for him.

What with the waterproof exterior, and a red head of hair and smooth Celtic-looking face, his disguise was so complete that his most intimate acquaintance would not have known him.

When he reached the corner where the hansom was to be in waiting for him, it was not there.

"I wonder what this means?" he muttered. "Can it be that I have been suspected of being a fraud, and this job has been put up, to test the matter? Well, I'll wait and see!"

The idea gave him a deal of uneasiness, but not for more than a few minutes, for soon a vehicle came tearing along over the cobblestones, and halted at the corner where Dick was standing underneath the gas-lamp.

"Hello! That you?" demanded the man on the box.

"Yes!"

"What's the word?"

"Faculty."

"All right. Hump yourself in out o' the rain, an' let me be off!"

Dick lost no time entering the hansom, and with the glass doors closed in front, was all secure from the rain.

It unfortunately so happened, however, that the wind blew from pretty nearly every point of the compass, and dashed against the windows with such violence that Dick was unable to see out, or form any accurate idea in which direction he was being carried.

He knew, however, that the streets ran east and west, and north and south, and from the direction the vehicle had been headed, when he entered it, he concluded, by the changing from one street to another, that he was being taken to

a southwestern section of the city—the same direction he had accompanied Fisk.

Still, on further study, there was no particular certainty about this, for the vehicle kept turning corners every few minutes, now in seemingly one direction, and now in another.

"Blamed if I wouldn't rather know where I am going!" Dick mused. "Ah! I have an idea, now."

At the next turn made by the cab, he partly opened one of the doors, and gazed out.

For ten minutes he watched the lamp-posts on the corners as he passed, and finally came to the conclusion that the hansom was going down Broad street, the widest thoroughfare in the city.

Twenty minutes sufficed to bring the journey to an end, and Dick disembarked in an extreme lower section, familiarly known to Philadelphians, as "The Neck." It is inhabited chiefly by the poorer class of laboring men, a large proportion of whom are employed by the railroads that enter the city.

"Of this fact Dick of course knew nothing; but when he alighted from the hansom in the rain, and was pointed out a door by the driver, he found himself in front of a house that had none too inviting an appearance.

A tap on the door and the password admitted him to a narrow hall, dark as the shades of Egypt.

Of the person who admitted him he was only able to gain an instant's glance ere the door was slammed shut and locked.

"Come on," a coarse voice ordered, "and keep your hand on my shoulder. When I say 'steps' be careful."

Then they proceeded.

Not only one pair of steps did they descend through the darkness, but three, by which time Dick concluded that they must be journeying to the innermost parts of *terra firma*.

Finally, however, a door opened, and the detective spy was ushered into a room about twenty feet square.

Barring the lights, of which there were two—candles, with their holders—the only furniture was a long pine table, with stools surrounding it.

Seated at this table were four men, three of whom were roughly dressed and repulsive-looking, whose faces but too plainly reflected the intemperate and criminal lives they had led.

The fourth man was the handsome, immaculate Captain Fisk.

Dick's escort, under inspection of the light, proved to be a negro, large, ugly, and powerful.

Fisk immediately arose upon Dick's entrance. "Ah, is that you, Plummer? Glad you have come so punctually. Boys, this is our new ally, Pete Plummer, of Chicago!"

The four tough-looking citizens arose and shook hands with Dick, and were separately introduced as Ike Hoon, Pat McCarty, Hen Galer, and Hutch Higgins.

The five men then sat down at the table, and indulged in a dose of alleged wine, although to Dick it seemed nothing more than sweetened water.

"One of the boys hasn't arrived yet," Fisk said, "and so we will not proceed to business until he does come. Thunder! but you've made a big change in your appearance, Pete."

"Think so? Well, perhaps you are right. But, do you think were I to walk into a police court, I would not be recognized?"

"I'm positive of it. But for the peculiar brilliancy of your eyes, I should not have recognized you, on your arrival just now."

"Well, it's the first time I ever bothered myself so much to change my appearance. However, I suppose the change was necessary."

"What was your last job before striking Phila?" asked Hutch Higgins, who, by the way, was the largest and most ruffianly-looking customer of the lot.

"Well, nothing in particular, to tell the truth!" the detective answered. "You see, I was watched so close that I really got no chance to plan any job, or if I planned it t'would have been extremely bad to have executed it. That's what drove me out of Chicago."

"Well, if we make success of two jobs we have in view, I allow we won't have a lack o' money to live on, for some months to come!" Captain Fisk declared. "And you're just the chap we want for an assistant, Plummer. How are you fixed for tools?"

"Oh! I've a daisy set, but I did not bring them along, presuming there would be no use for them, to-night."

"Well, no, not to-night, although it is to be regretted that such a favorable night should

pass unimproved. However, our plans are not all yet perfected, and it will not do to move, until all is in readiness."

"I believe you made reference to a missing member of The Faculty?" Dick observed.

"Yes, and a valuable one, too. It is partially through him that we hope to capture a big boodle. He will be here, soon!"

"What is his name?"

"Well, we know him as Ham, although he's no Ham-fatter!" Fisk facetiously replied.

"Kinder strikes me you're purty curious, for a new member!" Hutch Higgins observed, suspiciously.

"What is more natural than that I should be?" Dick asked. "What more natural than that I should want to know with whom I am to associate in this matter?"

"Well, we ain't been given the oath, yet, an' by jingo! I don't believe in givin' too much slack ter the rope 'til yer takes the oath!"

"Oh! suit yourselves about that, I'm not particular. If I am not entitled to the full confidence of those I'm to mate with, why I'm willing to withdraw!"

"Well, not much you won't. You've got to go the hull hog, or die, now thet Fisk has been fool enough to take ye on!"

"Oh! pshaw! Shut up, Higgins!" the captain commanded. "Who's in command, here, anyhow? You're too cussed suspicious. Plummer is all right, haven't I said so?"

"If you find him wanting, he is at your disposal, to do with, as you please!" the bogus Plummer declared.

Higgins made no reply, above a grunt, expressive of his dissatisfaction; but it was patent he did not view Dick with anything like favor. As for the detective, he was evidently quite at ease, a fact that tended to quiet any suspicions the others might have entertained.

He chatted volubly about his Chicago exploits, and life in the Joliet Penitentiary, and soon had all his listeners interested, barring Higgins, who drew sullenly at his grimy pipe.

In an hour's time there was the jingle of a bell, and the negro went to answer the summons, soon returning with a tall, slim young man, with spindling legs, and a cadaverous countenance, lit up by ferret-like black eyes.

"Mr. Plummer, Mr. Ham!" Fisk said, by way of introduction. "You're late, to-night, Ham!"

"No wonder!" Ham growled. "The devil's ruling high to-night, and I couldn't get here before."

"What's the matter?" Fisk quickly demanded. Ham glanced apprehensively at the new member.

"Is he initiated?" was the query.

"No!"

"Then I'll keep my trap closed until he is!" was the blunt retort.

"Very well. It won't take long to attend to that matter!" Fisk added, pleasantly. "Are you ready to take the oath, Mr. Plummer?"

"Quite," Dick briefly replied.

"Stand up then and fold your arms across your breast."

The order was promptly obeyed; then four of the members of "The Faculty" arose, and the muzzles of as many revolvers were placed against the detective's head.

Fisk, standing a few paces off, then said:

"I will now administer the oath, the terms of which are that, whoever breaks it, shall come to a sudden and violent death. Peter Plummer, hold up your right hand, and distinctly repeat after me the words I utter."

Fisk went Dick's right hand, and the oath was administered—an oath so startling, that it will not bear repetition here.

Nevertheless, Dick made the necessary responses with that coolness and nerve characteristic of the man.

The oath administered, Dick found a decided change in the demeanor of his new acquaintances.

All surrounded him, shook him by the hand, and bade him welcome as a member of The Faculty, after which all reseated themselves at the table.

"Now," said Fisk, "we will hear from you, Mr. Ham. What is the trouble? Have the police nosed up a clew, or what?"

"Bah! for them!" Ham said, contemptuously.

"They are a set of idiots. No, the trouble is in another direction. The crib where there are so many precious jewels must be attended to without delay. The bank job can wait."

"Well? Go on!"

"It's this way!" Ham proceeded. "The old man and his dutiful son had a devil of a row, not many hours ago, over the dutiful son's dis-

covery that his sister was engaged to a lackey who goes under the name of Donald Da Costa!"

This information was received by whistles of surprise by all except Deadwood Dick, who manifested no particular interest, outwardly.

Hutch Higgins appeared the most agitated, for an oath escaped his lips.

Mr. Ham went on:

"Well, the row between the father and son resulted in the former's getting a black eye, and the latter's getting thrown headlong into the street, with the order never to darken his door again. The enraged parent furthermore asserted that he should make a new will, giving all to his daughter and prospective son-in-law!"

"That's tough on you, Ham!" Fisk said, consolingly.

"Rather!" the other growled, "but it serves me right for not fixing that accursed coachman, long ago. I'd 'a' done it, too, only I didn't want to get into the papers."

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"There's only one thing to do, and that is, seek revenge. But, wait! you have not heard all. After I was put out the house, I hung around the neighborhood to watch developments awhile. I knew the old man was in earnest, and naturally I was somewhat interested."

"Within an hour's time, no less than four messenger boys visited and left the house. I waylaid several of them, and tried to pump them, but to no use. Finally, Jim Ford, the old man's lawyer, visited the house, and remained there for upward of two hours. Later in the day, the old man and Haidee appeared on the street, in the family barouche, and were driven to Fairmount Park."

"I waited. In an hour they returned—Haidee in the barouche; the old man in an ambulance. The horses had run away, thrown him out, and so injured him that the doctor says he cannot possibly live more than a few days at the furthest, and death is to be expected at any moment!"

Here Ham paused, and gazed inquiringly at his companions.

"Well, that's bad!" Fisk declared. "I suppose, according to your tell, you're left out in the cold!"

"That's about the size of it. There's no doubt but what the old man has changed his will, and if he flunks, every penny he's got, not to mention the diamonds, will go to Haidee and her cussed coachman. I tell you, something has got to be done!"

"Yes, you're right. But, when and how? Those jewels we have so diligently been plotting to gain possession of must not escape us. How much money has your father got, besides the diamonds?"

"I'll give that up!" Ham replied. "He's got a boodle, but just how much I do not know. He ought to be able to buy up a railroad or two!"

"And he keeps it all on the premises?"

"Cert. The money and the jewels are all in the big safe, which experts say is burglar-proof. The old man is shy of banks, since he got nipped in that Ward-Grant fiasco."

At this Deadwood Dick laughed.

"You've got a high old knowledge of safes!" he observed. "That safe never was made that I can't open. Let me get near enough to it! Why, even a time-lock safe is easy manipulated, once you know how to go to work at it!"

This remark caused the other members of The Faculty to survey him with something akin to admiration.

"Then, if that's the case, you're just the man we want to boss the job!" Ham Hylton asserted.

"Of course he is!" added Fisk. "That's one reason I admitted him to The Faculty. He's the right man in the right place, and we're in luck to make so valuable an acquisition, I can tell you!"

Even Hutch Higgins now condescended to look upon the new member with favor.

"Well, let's get ready and go to work at once," Ham insisted. "We must get possession of at least the diamonds before the old man dies, or we may not get another chance. Once Haidee gets her clutches on them, the chances are that she will put them away in some Safety Deposit Vault."

"I don't see that we shall be able to act on the matter to-night," suggested Fisk. "If your father is so badly hurt as you intimate, it is more than likely that the whole household will be up and stirring all night, which would make it next to impossible to proceed with our work. Were you still a member of the household, it would be different, but under the circumstances things look bad!"

"Devilish bad!" growled Higgins. "The job has been put off too long already."

"Well, there's no use of crying over spilt milk," Ham said philosophically. "If the job ain't attended to to-night, I won't be surprised if the jewels elude us yet. What do you think about it, Plummer?"

"Oh! I don't believe there is reasonable cause for immediate alarm!" Dick replied, "and as no preparations have been made for the attempt, I should say it would be highly inconsistent with your usual caution, to make the trial without due deliberation."

"You're sensible there!" Fisk declared admiringly. "I for one don't want to be caught in any trap."

"Have ye got a key to yer old man's house?" demanded Hutch Higgins of young Hylton.

"Nary key!" was the reply. "There's always a bell-boy on duty at the door, so there was no need of my carrying a key."

"And you say every door and window is provided with a burglar-alarm?"

"Yes."

"That makes it bad then. It will be difficult to get into the house."

"How did you get in before when the silverware was stolen?" queried Dick.

"They didn't get in. It was me who chucked the stuff out," and young Hylton chuckled, at which his comrades laughed loudly.

This disclosure, as well as the other discoveries he had made, gave the spy no little surprise.

Hamlet Hylton was a thief and a burglar, and a consort of thieves and burglars.

So was Hutch Higgins, the man, who, according to Mrs. Fielding's story, had brought Colonel Delos Da Costa's will to America and placed it in the hands of Hoyt Hylton.

And now, there was a conspiracy afoot to rob Hylton, senior, of the Da Costa diamonds, the possession of which he had fraudulently obtained.

The question that arose was:

Should he interfere, or should he assist in the burglary?

If he caused or permitted an interference to be made, the chances were that he would get very little thanks for his pains from Hylton. If, on the other hand, he assisted in the burglary, he would be carrying out his scheme, and at the same time stand a chance of gaining possession of the jewels himself, and restoring them to their rightful owner.

After that, he could cause the arrest of the burglars.

Which should he do?

There was no need for deliberation in the matter. He would remain hand in hand with the burglars, temporarily, and trust to luck to get possession of the Da Costa diamonds.

In the mean time the burglars had been further discussing the situation, without coming to any practical determination what to do.

"I think I have a plan that will work," Dick now remarked.

"Then, let's have it!" urged Fisk. "Any plan is better than none."

"Well, here it is: We will put the job down for to-morrow night, after midnight. To-morrow, in the guise of a detective, I will pay a visit to Hoyt Hylton, and state that I have reason to believe that his house is to be broken into and robbed, and I shall ask permission to remain in the house over night in order to nab the burglars!"

"Bully for you! The plan's a good one!" cried young Hylton.

"Right, it is!" assented Fisk.

"Of course your father won't refuse my request?" Dick went on, seeing how he already has suffered."

"Of course not!"

"Well, then, I'll do guard duty around the interior of the house, until everything is quiet, and then I'll admit you, and then, we'll go for the safe. I may be able to study out the combination by the time you arrive."

"Better not monkey with the safe 'til we all git there!" Higgins grunted.

"Why not?"

"Waal, because ef ye happened to git the thing open, you'd gobble on to the contents, and light out!"

"Thank you for nothin'!" Dick retorted.

"Always look to home before suspecting others of sneaking treachery. It happens I ain't built that way, my man!"

"D'ye mean to intimate that I'm a sneak?" roared the ruffian, glaring at Dick as if he would like to eat him.

"No, I did not say so in so many words, but if the shoe fits you, why, wear it!"

"Cuss your impudence, I've a mind to smash your head for you!"

"So? Now, maybe you'd find it something of a job to do *that*, my friend. I don't, as a rule, loan my head out as a punching machine. When I do, I'll invite you around, to take the first crack at it!"

"Here! here! stop your growling!" ordered Captain Fisk. "There's no sense in it, and I'll not have it! Hutch, you owe Plummer an apology."

"Oho! do I? Well, now, I'm bettin' he'll wait a while 'til he gits it!" was the surly reply.

Here the matter dropped, and the conversation took a turn.

It was agreed that Plummer should visit Hoyt Hylton, as he had suggested, and that the burglars were to be at the rear of the mansion the following midnight, prepared to crack the safe as soon as they were admitted.

The meeting in the sub-cellar then broke up, and all hands made their way up-stairs and out into the street, whence they scattered in various directions, Dick going back up-town.

He had to foot it, as the cab which had brought him was nowhere to be seen.

Fortunately, it had stopped raining, so that he did not mind walking.

In due time he reached his and Rats's lodgings, and found the young sleuth still up and reading.

Rats related his experience in searching for Mercedes, after which Dick said:

"Very well. That's all there will be for you to do for the present, so you can amuse yourself as you choose until I need you again. Should you meet your mother go up and speak to her, for I'd like to know just how crazy she is."

They then went to bed. Early the next morning Dick was up and stirring, and making preparations for a new and novel adventure.

How it would terminate he was not prepared to decide.

CHAPTER IX.

DICK'S VISIT TO HYLTON.

DEADWOOD DICK's first action was plain. He must first visit the Hylton mansion.

So, changing his dress to that worn when he first met the man of wealth, he set forth, and a ring of the bell at the mansion door was answered by a colored boy in livery, to whom Dick gave his card, and a few minutes later the detective was ushered into the sick chamber on the first floor.

Hylton was in bed and bolstered up with the pillows. His face was pale, almost haggard.

By the bedside sat a remarkably pretty young maiden with hazel eyes and sunny hair, and a figure that was the perfection of symmetrical grace.

Hylton's face brightened perceptibly as the detective entered.

"Ah! Mr. Bristol, I am very glad to see you," he said. "Although your visit is unexpected, it is none the less welcome. Haidee, give Mr. Bristol a chair. My daughter, Mr. Bristol."

After acknowledging the introduction Dick became seated.

"Yes; I heard that you had met with a serious accident, and thought I'd call and see if I could be of service to you," Dick said.

"Alas! I fear not. My family physician has diagnosed my case, and says I cannot possibly recover from the severe internal injuries I have sustained. The only thing he can do is to keep me under the influence of anaesthetics, until such a time as the good Lord may see fit to take me off!"

Dick wondered if this man, who had robbed and abused his next of kin, really expected clemency from the Divine Power.

"Well, I am sorry to hear this," Dick answered. "But I hope you may yet recover." He might have added, "so that the law can take its course with you." He did not, however, but went on: "I did not call to offer medical aid, but as an officer of the law."

"Ah!" and Hylton looked startled. "How do you mean, sir?"

"I mean that, as you are helpless, you need official protection."

"I do not understand. Pray explain."

"Well, you see, there is a plot against you. From what I have learned you have a fortune in diamonds, as well as a large sum of money locked up in your safe."

"Yes, yes! What of it?"

"Well, I am led to believe that an attempt will be made to-night to rob the safe, and by the same gang who robbed you before."

"Good heavens! you don't really mean it?" the invalid exclaimed, in evident trepidation.

"But I do. You know I have undertaken to hunt down these burglars. Well, I have succeeded in so far that I am aware of their plan to rob you. Learning of your helpless condition, I came to see you, for two reasons, namely: First, to protect your property, and, second, to surprise the burglars at their work, and capture them, and thereby secure the promised reward for my services. Therefore, if you have no objections, I would like to remain in your house over night."

"It shall be as you wish, young man, and you shall be well rewarded for your kindness. But, you will need outside help, will you not?"

"On the contrary, no. I can manage it all myself."

"But I do not see how the burglars are to effect an entrance without creating an alarm. Every door and window in the house is equipped with a burglar alarm, which connects, by electricity, with the signal alarm at the nearest police station. After the alarm is set, at night, the police would be here before the robbers could secure their plunder."

"The alarm is set at night?"

"Yes, every night."

"By whom?"

"Usually by me, but now Haidee will have to attend to it."

"About what hour has it been customary for you to set this alarm?"

"At bedtime."

"It therefore is not in use during the daytime?"

"No; for we must use the doors and windows then."

"Well, Mr. Hylton, the alarm will not have the effect to keep the burglars out of the house; nor will they attempt to force an entrance."

"Indeed? Then, how can they get in?"

"Easy enough. They have a confederate in your household. This confederate, when the proper hour arrives for the attempt, will shut off the alarm, and admit the burglars!"

Hylton looked thunderstruck.

"A confederate!" he gasped. "Impossible! there is no one whom I cannot implicitly trust, in my employ!"

"There must be some one, nevertheless. You have a son, I believe?"

"Yes—a sort of one!" Hylton answered bitterly, his brow darkening.

"You had a falling out with this son, yesterday, threw him out of the house, and threatened to disinherit him, and later on, sent for your lawyer and made your will in favor of your daughter and her affianced husband, Don Da Costa. Am I not right?"

"You are right. But, how in the name of all that is wonderful, did you learn this?"

"By accident, I heard your son say so. He is greatly incensed at you, and threatens revenge. This revenge will be consummated when your safe is rifled. I may further add, your son is a member of the burglar gang!"

Both father and daughter uttered ejaculations of incredulous astonishment.

"By Heaven! I cannot believe this!" Hylton gasped. "My son a burglar? Impossible, sir!"

"It is true. It was your son who assisted in robbing you of your silver plate!"

The stricken man sunk back, whiter than before.

"Brandy! brandy!" he cried in tremulous tones.

The liquor was administered by Haidee, and directly, he rallied.

"This is the worst blow of my life!" he added. "I have known that Hamlet has been wild, but never had an idea that he had descended to the level of a thief. But, if what you say be true, detective, why have you not arrested the scoundrel?"

"Because I want to bag the whole gang at oneswoop!" Dick replied. "If I were to pull one the others would take alarm, and escape!"

"This all seems incredible to me!" Hylton declared, still doubtingly. "I cannot understand how you, a stranger in the city, should have learned so much in so short a time. I beg pardon, but I am almost inclined to disbelieve you."

"Suit yourself, about that!" Dick answered. "I presumed you would appreciate the interest I have taken in protecting your interests, else I should not have called."

"I do appreciate it if what you say is true. But, I cannot see how you have found out so much!"

"Listen, then, and I will enlighten you, on the promise of yourself and daughter that not a word of my confidence shall pass beyond you!"

"Certainly we promise!" Hylton returned, and Haidee nodded acquiescence.

Dick then proceeded to disclose the method used to get into the burglars' den, and the results of his scheme thus far.

Both Hylton and Haidee listened in unfeigned amazement.

"Well, you are a shrewd one!" the former declared. "To tell the truth, I took but little stock in you on the occasion of our first meeting, but now I see my mistake. I wouldn't like to be a criminal and have you on my trail! There is one thing I can't understand, however, concerning the confederate of the burglars, who, you say, is in my house. As my son is forbidden here, it cannot be he!"

"No. But, he has lived here, and you have servants, and you know a glittering offer of money is often a source of temptation. I know of many men who are to-day wealthy and respected citizens, yet secured their riches in ways they would not like exposed!"

This shot caused Hylton to level a sharp, inquiring, even startled glance at Deadwood Dick, but the detective's face betrayed absolutely nothing to show that his remark was meant to be personal.

"Well, perhaps you are right," Hylton confessed, after a brief pause. "I know it was not the case with me, and so I don't bother myself about others' faults. I hope to live to see you capture these burglars, even if my son is one of them. And, as for your interest in protecting my property, rest assured I thank you heartily, and you shall be well rewarded—if not by me, by my daughter."

"My safe is in my study, which is the adjoining room—a rear parlor that looks out upon the back lawn. Haidee, you can show the gentleman the room, as he will probably want to spend the night there. Also give him the key of the door opening from the study into the hall, and instruct the hall boy to admit Mr. Bristol, whenever he comes again."

Haidee bowed, and arose to obey directions.

Dick also arose, but paused a moment, before following his fair guide.

"When did you last open your safe, Mr. Hylton?" he asked.

"Day before yesterday, I believe."

"You know that everything was all right at that time, eh?"

"Certainly. Why do you ask?"

"Simply because I'd like to know if all is right, now. In assuming guard duty over the room, I would be in an unpleasant fix if anything should turn up missing."

"True. Still, there's no danger but what all is right. To make doubly sure, Haidee can open the safe, so you can see for yourself."

Accordingly, Dick accompanied the maiden into the adjoining room, which communicated with the bedroom by folding doors.

The study was an elegantly furnished apartment, one of the most conspicuous features being a huge Marvin's safe, which stood in one corner.

There were two rear windows looking out into a back yard. There was also a door opening into the hall.

The windows were without either shutters or blinds, inside or out.

An easy matter it would be for burglars to force an entrance, thought the spy.

After he had taken a good look about the place, Haidee went to the safe, and proceeded to slowly turn the combination knob of the door, three times backward and then carefully forward, to a given number on the dial.

Dick watched the turns narrowly, and when at last she swung the door open, he was of the opinion that he could master the combination, himself.

Once the door was open, Haidee took a barrel-shaped casket from the safe, and glanced into it; then closed and replaced it.

"The diamonds are all right," she remarked.

She then pulled open a drawer, which was packed full of bank-notes, of large denominations.

"And the money is all right," she added, closing and locking the safe.

They returned, then, to the sick room.

"Well?" Hylton demanded, interrogatively.

"All's right!" Dick assured. "I'll go, now, and return toward night."

He took his departure, and as he left the room, he fancied he heard a peculiar chuckle, but did not look around to see whether or no he was mistaken.

Leaving the house, he did not immediately quit the premises, but went around to the stable, where he found a rather good-looking young man sitting upon a stool, in the doorway, smoking.

"This is Donald Da Costa, I believe?" Dick queried, pausing in front of the young man.

"Yes, sir, that is my name, I don't think I know yours, however?"

"Perhaps not. My name is Bristol. I am a detective!"

"Indeed!" The young man looked surprised, but made no further remark.

"I chanced to call on Hylton, and so I thought I'd run around and see you," Dick continued, in a sociable manner. "You have a brother, I believe?"

"Yes; that is, if he is living. I haven't seen, or heard of him, in a good while."

"Oh! he's alive and kicking, and as my *protège*, is making his mark as a detective. I presumed you would like to hear from him?"

"So I would. So he didn't stay with Madame Lagrange, eh?"

"No. He ran away, and I picked him up on the streets of New York."

"I thought he wouldn't stay bound out, long. He always had a will of his own. Does he know where I am?"

"Yes."

"Is he here in the city?"

"Yes."

"Then, why the dickens don't he come and see me?"

"Well, I told him he'd better come but he didn't seem to be inclined that way. He said he and you used to have a good many spats, and that you used to feel above him, somewhat; so, considering that he had entered into a legitimate profession, he considers himself a peg or two higher than you!"

At this Da Costa laughed, heartily.

"That's Royal to a T!" he said. "He was always as independent as a hog on ice. However, tell him I would really like to see him."

"I will do so. Seems to me you ought to be in a better position than acting as coachman to Hoyt Hylton, your own uncle."

"So I ought, but, then, you know, it's hard work to get a job in the winter time, and a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. Then, to—"

Here Donald hesitated, the color in his cheeks changing.

"I understand," Dick at once added, "there's another obstacle in the way of your leaving here—a very pretty obstacle, too—and her name is Haidee. Is there any truth in it that you are engaged to her, and that Hylton has changed his will in favor of you and Haidee?"

Don looked greatly astonished.

"It is true that Haidee and I are engaged," he said, "but it is not with my uncle's approval. Indeed, he positively forbids such a thing, and not an hour ago he sent me my wages and notified me that I could consider myself dismissed after to-day. So, if Hylton has changed his will, you can bet he did not do it in my favor. If he dies, Haidee shall be mine, anyhow! But, pray, sir, how did you find out so much?"

Dick smiled.

"We detectives have ways of finding out a great many things," he said, evasively. "When did you see your mother last?"

"Not since she sent me off to school. While I was there the poor afflicted woman went crazy, and they put her in an insane asylum. I never have had the heart to go and see her."

"But, did you not know that she is no longer in the asylum?"

"Indeed, I did not!"

"Well, such is the case. Hers was only a mild case of dementia, and she is even now wandering about the streets of the city as a rag-picker."

Da Costa held up his hands in horror.

"Good heavens! you do not mean it!" he ejaculated. "My mother a rag-picker?"

"It is true. Here is her address, and you'd better hunt her up. Perhaps the sight of you might have the effect to clear away the cloud from her bewildered brain."

"God only knows, I hope so!" Donald said, fervently. "I shall lose no time in hunting her up, rest assured, and I am deeply grateful for the information you have given me, for I had no idea but what my poor mother was still in the asylum. Please to send Royal to me, and together we will try and find our suffering parent."

This Dick promised to do, and then, bidding Da Costa adieu, he turned his steps toward the office of the chief of police.

CHAPTER X.

HIGGINS AS A BULLDOZER.

AFTER visiting the office of the police chief, Dick secured some cartridges at a gun store, some strong leather straps at a harness shop,

and then once more started for the Hylton residence.

When he came in sight of it he saw something that caused him considerable surprise.

A man was about entering the house whom he at once recognized.

It was Hutch Higgins.

"Humph! I wonder what the blazes he is doing here," the detective muttered. "I must overhear this interview. It may open up some important developments."

Recognizing him, the hall-boy admitted him, so that there was no necessity for him to ring.

Dick then hastened cautiously along the hall, and admitted himself to the study, *via* the hall door.

A moment later he was seated by the door that communicated with Hylton's room, with his ear applied to the crack between the folding-doors.

"I thought you were in South America," the invalid was saying.

The other laughed, rather sneeringly, it seemed to the spy listener.

"Well, maybe you did; but I changed my mind, and didn't go to South America at all."

"Why, you gave me your word of honor that you would, and never return."

"Humph! What of that? Didn't I just tell you I changed my mind? I found Philadelphia enough sight better a place to live in than Rio, and so I stayed here."

"Well, what do you want? I am not aware that you were sent an invitation to pay me a visit."

"Of course not. But then, you know, I am not a man who bothers my head about ceremony, so I overlooked your neglect, and hearing that you were in a fair way to shuffle off this mortal coil soon, I thought I'd call and settle up!"

"Settle up? What do you mean?"

"Why, I mean that I want my share of your boodle. There isn't anything mean about me."

"Well, you'll get no money out of me, and don't you forget it!" Hylton declared. "I've paid you the last cent I ever shall."

"Think so?"

"I am positive. I paid your price once, and that's all you'll get."

"Oh, I guess not. I've got you in my power, and if you don't come to terms I can make it hot for you."

"Oh, you can, eh? Well, how are you going to do it?"

"By having you arrested for conspiracy, and by snatching the Da Costa diamonds away from you and restoring them to their rightful owners."

"Bah! The diamonds belong to me. I can prove it by the will."

Hutch Higgins laughed scornfully.

"A fig for that will," he sneered. "Do you suppose I was so big a fool as to sell you Delos Da Costa's real and genuine will? Not much! The will you hold, I counterfeited myself. The will I hold is the genuine one which Da Costa executed."

Despite the fact that the family physician had advised Hylton that he had not long to live, the man swore furiously.

"Curses seize you!" he cried, angrily. "You are lying to me!"

"Oh, no!" Higgins retorted, triumphantly. "Don't let any such idea as that run away with you. I'm no fool. The will you hold is not worth the paper it is drawn upon. Moreover, you have never had it proved or recorded. The genuine will was drawn and signed in Melbourne, and witnessed by three men!"

Hylton swore again.

"And so you expect to bleed me again, do you?" he cried. "Well, you'll not succeed. I hold the diamonds, and intend to, as long as I live, no matter how many wills you possess. I have not long to live, and I defy you!"

"You're a fool!" Higgins said, emphatically. "I saw your physician, to-day, and he said, judging by your present symptoms, you would linger along at least a number of days, and he was hopeful of your ultimate recovery. So, if you die at all, it will be in jail, providing you do not come to my terms."

"Indeed? Well, out of sheer curiosity, allow me to ask, what are your terms?"

"Five thousand dollars; upon receipt of which, I will never trouble you again!"

"I suppose not. Well, I shall not give you a cent. I am not afraid of what you can do. I am a well-known business man and generally respected. You are a low-bred loafer, and no one would believe you under oath!"

"I'll risk that. Now, look here, Hylton,

there's no use whatever of dilly-dallying about this matter. I mean business, and here's what I intend to do, if the five thousand dollars ain't forthcoming: I shall go before the proper authorities, and make affidavit as follows:

"That I, Hutchinson Higgins, was for a number of years the traveling companion of Colonel Delos Da Costa, during his tour of exploration; that Da Costa acquired a fortune in diamonds, and arranged to send them home to his wife, in care of her brother, one Hoyt Hylton. Later, said Higgins and Da Costa went to Australia, with a view of starting for America. There Da Costa was taken ill, and his life being despaired of, he made his last will and testament, bequeathing his all in equal parts to his wife and two sons. This will he gave to Higgins, to bring to the United States, and give to the wife, in case he, Da Costa, should not recover. Higgins, during Da Costa's long illness, telegraphed to Hoyt Hylton:

"Da Costa sick, must die. I have his will. What say?"

"He received in reply the following:

"Bring me will, making me sole heir, I will give you five thousand dollars!" I answered, "All right!"

"I copied the will, word for word, except that it made Hoyt Hylton sole heir instead of the Da Costas, and being an expert penman, the counterfeit was an excellent imitation."

"Da Costa did not die, and soon was well enough to be helped aboard a ship bound for San Francisco. It was his one desire, if he died at all, to die on American soil. Assisted by an acquaintance of mine, Ike Hoon, by name, I attended faithfully to Mr. Da Costa, but gradually he grew delirious, and one night when the ship was becalmed off the Solomon group, Da Costa was found missing, and it was supposed that, in one of his fits of delirium, he had jumped overboard and was drowned."

"Higgins came to San Francisco: Delos Da Costa, if he survived, was left on one of the islands of Melanesia."

"On his arrival in 'Frisco, Higgins mailed two letters. One was to Mercedes Da Costa, the wife, the other was to Hoyt Hylton, instructing Hylton to come at once to 'Frisco. He came and I returned with him. He showed the widow the will, and the shock of the blow drove her insane. You caused her to be incarcerated in a mad-house, and then settled down to enjoy your ill-gotten jewels. Your business career was eventful, but when you got short of money, you could always raise enough money on the jewels to give you a fresh start in life. When prosperity smiled on you, you would redeem the jewels. Thus you kept along, until you made a big stock speculation that made you rich enough to retire."

"This matter laid before the authorities, and sworn to by myself and Hoon, will cause your arrest, and you will be dragged from your comfortable quarters, here, to die in a prison cell."

"Now, then, Hoyt Hylton, what do you think of the situation?"

"I have nothing to say, except that I defy you," Hylton replied, grimly. "You dare not prefer such a charge against me, for, if you did, you would be giving yourself dead away, and you would be arrested in my stead!"

"Not if we turn State's evidence!" Higgins declared.

"The fact is, Hylton, we've got you by the horns, and there's no use of your trying to dispute the fact, for we've even got more substantial proof of our charge, than you dream of. If you will glance over this list of hotel arrivals, you will see, for yourself."

A moment later, the listener in the next room heard Hoyt Hylton utter an astonished ejaculation.

"Delos Da Costa alive, and back in Philadelphia!" he ejaculated. "I do not believe it!"

"It is true," Higgins declared. "He arrived from Australia on the steamship Breton. I chanced to be at the wharf when he landed, but I didn't speak to him. He has changed a good deal, his hair being as white as snow; but he is still strong and vigorous, and the set expression of his countenance is that of a man who has been nursing vengeance in his heart, for many a day. Yes! yes! Hoyt Hylton, Colonel Da Costa has come back to life, and I wouldn't like to stand in your shoes."

"So, now, you understand the matter as it is, and I give you ten minutes to come to time. If you do not, you shall spend to-night in jail, so sure as my name is Higgins!"

There was a brief silence. The invalid was evidently considering what was best to do.

"Even were I inclined to bargain with you," he said, at length, "what good would it do me?"

If Da Costa has really returned, he will be likely to make me even as much trouble as you can, and I would be five thousand dollars out, for nothing."

"Never fear for that!" Higgins exclaimed. "You give me my price and I'll guarantee never to disturb you again, nor shall Delos Da Costa. I swear to that!"

"You swore before, but didn't stick to your oath!"

"True; but it's different, this time. It is absolutely necessary that I get out of the city at once. To-morrow will not be time enough! I must have money, and you must furnish it, either willingly, or otherwise. I am desperate, and if you do not satisfy my demands, I shall take it upon myself to help myself. So now, and for the last time, what is your answer?"

Again Hylton was silent, for the space of a couple of minutes, when he answered:

"Well, I suppose there's no other way of averting the disgrace, except by acceding to your demands. It will be impossible, however, for me to give you the money before this evening."

"How so?"

"Because I am unable to stir from my bed, and there is no one else who knows the combination of the lock of my safe, except my daughter. She is now absent from the house, and will not be back until after dark!"

"Humph! that's only an excuse to put me off!" Higgins growled.

"It is not," Hylton replied. "It would be no object for me to try to deceive. Come again at half-past six, and you shall have the money."

"I won't wait!" the ruffian cried. "Give me the combination, and I'll open the safe, myself!"

"Oh no! I'd submit to a dozen arrests, before I'd let you get into that safe. So take your choice. If you really want the money bad, come after six o'clock. If not, do the next best thing!"

Higgins was silent for a minute, then evidently coming to the conclusion that the easiest way was the best, he put on his hat, and arose to depart.

"Very well; I'll be here at the appointed hour!" he said, "and if the money ain't forthcoming, then, it will be the worse for you, mark my word!"

He left the room and the house in evident savage humor.

CHAPTER XI.

A BLOW IN THE DARK.

OF course every word of the foregoing conversation had reached the ears of the eager Dick, and as may be supposed, it proved of interest to him, especially that part relating to the return of Delos Da Costa.

"I must see this gentleman at once!" he decided. "But, first, another matter must be attended to. Higgins will return at six o'clock for his hush, but he must not have an opportunity to get the Da Costa diamonds. For the time being, they must belong to me!"

He stole softly to the safe and began to experiment with the combination-knob. Recalling as nearly as possible the moves Haidee had made, he turned the knob three times backward and then forward; but at the end of ten minutes he had accomplished nothing, for the door was still unyielding.

Nothing daunted, however, the detective pursued his attempt, and at last, much to his joy, the massive barrier that had stood between him and so much wealth, swung open.

A moment more and Dick had the silver-bound ebony casket in his hands, and was gazing at the glittering little heap of diamonds within.

There were perhaps eighteen of the jewels, all handsomely cut, but unset. The majority of them were of large size, and very brilliant.

"By Jove! they're beauties, every one of them!" he muttered. "If I'm any judge, their value has not been overrated. Now, let me see: I don't want the casket. I'll remove the diamonds and return the receptacle to the safe."

This he did, carefully stowing the jewels away in one of his pockets.

He then closed the safe, turned the knob, and silently passed from the house.

Going down-town, he examined that morning's papers, and found Delos Da Costa's name mentioned among the arrivals at the Lafayette, on Broad street, and thither took his way.

Inquiry at the office elicited the information that, although Da Costa was registered there, he had not been seen since early in the day.

As it was getting dusk, Dick concluded not to wait, and set out for his lodgings, hoping to find Rats there.

But in this he was disappointed.

Rats had been there, but had gone, leaving a note on the table, which read as follows:

"I Am goin' to St. Mary street. If yure got time yu cum 2. Rats."

Dick glanced at his watch reflectively.

"It's nearly six o'clock," he mused, "and I cannot get back to Hylton's in time to catch Higgins there, it is likely, so there's no need of being in a particular hurry. This St. Mary street is a tough locality, they say, and there's no telling but what Rats may get into some trouble. I guess about the best thing for me to do is to hunt him up."

"First, however, he procured supper at a restaurant; then he made a few inquiries and set out in search of his little pard.

The night was intensely dark, and the gas lamps gave out but a feeble, flickering light.

When Dick finally reached the entrance to St. Mary street, he found it to be a dark, narrow, forbidding thoroughfare, lined on either side by grim brick tenements, in the basements of nearly every other one of which was a dive or gin-mill.

The sidewalks were narrow and broken, the gutters reeked with filth, and the denizens of this ill-favored locality, who appeared to skulk along like wolves of the night, were the hardest looking wretches to be found in the city.

"By jingo! this is a tough looking quarter!" Dick muttered, pausing before entering the street. "I reckon a stranger stands a good chance of getting knocked over the head, who goes cavorting around here. If Rats has had the grit to go on an exploring expedition, through here, he's got more grit than I gave him credit for having."

Among other armaments which Dick had equipped himself with, that day, was a black-jack, and this he now drew, ready for business, and made his way into the gloomy thoroughfare.

The further he advanced, the darker it grew, and the more stifling became the odors arising from the gutters and alleys.

From the basement dives floated snatches of ribald song, and peals of boisterous laughter, intermingled with profanity. Here, a bar-room brawl, and further on a dance, in which the revelers seemed vying with each other, to see who could make the most noise.

Not a policeman was to be seen, for it is a well known fact that the blue-coated guardians of the peace have no more liking for St. Mary street than the "nobility" of St. Mary street have for the blue coats.

Dick had progressed about half-way through the street, without discovering Pat Duffy's saloon, when he suddenly stumbled over a dark object that was lying on the sidewalk, and fell forward to the ground.

As he gathered himself up, he heard a groan, and bending forward, made out that it was a man, covered with blood, over whom he had fallen.

"Hello! who are you, and what are you doing here, man?" Dick asked.

"I've been assaulted, and robbed!" the man replied, faintly. "For God's sake go have a policeman send for an ambulance, so I can be taken to a hospital."

"Are you badly hurt?"

"Yes. I have a terrible scalp wound, a broken arm, and I fear one of my ribs too, is fractured."

"Indeed? Then you must be gotten out of this dangerous neighborhood. Can you not, with my assistance, walk to the next corner? I will then hunt up an officer, and send for an ambulance."

"I will try, tho' I am very weak from loss of blood."

The man was large and powerful, but Dick managed, at last, to get him on his feet, and together they moved slowly toward the adjacent corner, but every step caused the stranger to flinch with pain.

"What is your name?" Dick asked, noting that the man's hair was quite white.

"Delos Da Costa," was the reply.

"Delos Da Costa?" ejaculated Dick, in astonishment.

"Exactly. You seem surprised?"

"I am surprised."

"And why? You do not know me, or at least I do not know you."

"I know of you as Colonel Da Costa, the African diamond-hunter, who has long been regarded as dead. But, tell me, sir, how came you in the sorry plight I found you in, and especially in such a vile neighborhood?"

"I am rather short of breath, but I will tell

you in as few words as possible. I arrived from Australia yesterday, put up at the Hotel Lafayette. Late this afternoon I was waited upon by a young man who claimed to be the son of my brother-in-law, Hoyt Hylton. This young man, whose name is Hamlet, appeared to be very glad to see me, and when I asked after my wife and children, he said they were very poor and lived in an obscure part of the city. He also volunteered to show me the way, and by the time we reached the western entrance to this street it was quite dark. My guide said our destination was midway in the street, and so we entered it and groped our way along.

"When we had reached the point where you found me, young Hylton hit me a fearful blow on the head with some heavy object, and I fell to the ground, partially stunned and quite helpless. Then my assailant went through my pockets, taking my watch and chain and my pocketbook. He then gave me a kick in the ribs and another on the left arm, and ran away just before you came up. That's all I can tell you now. If you will get an ambulance I will be very much obliged to you, for I am suffering excruciating pain."

"I will have a vehicle, with all possible speed," Dick replied, they having by this time reached the street's upper end. "You lean against this wall while I hunt up a policeman."

Leaving Da Costa braced up against a dead wall, he hastened away.

He had to go several blocks ere he could find an officer, to whom he gave the story of his "find."

The "cop" at once rung an alarm for an ambulance from one of the police telegraph boxes, and then accompanied Dick back to the corner of St. Mary street.

When they arrived there, however, Da Costa was not there. Nothing remained where he had been left standing but a pool of blood.

A search of the neighborhood, and particularly of St. Mary street was made, but all to no avail. Da Costa had disappeared as though the earth had opened up and swallowed him, and no trace or track could be found.

So when the ambulance came it had to go away without its patient.

The officer, too, soon gave up the search, and went off patrolling his beat.

Not so with Dick. He scoured the neighborhood until nearly midnight, when, remembering he was wanted elsewhere, he set out for the Hylton mansion.

CHAPTER XII.

REUNITED AFTER MANY YEARS.

IN the mean time, what had become of Delos Da Costa.

His slight walk assisted by Deadwood Dick, had not served to improve his condition. The terrible blow he had received, caused his head to swim, and his fractured arm made him faint, and Deadwood Dick had hardly got around the corner, when the colonel gave a groan, and sunk to the pavement in a swoon.

At that moment two persons came hurrying along, from the western end of the street.

One was a woman, tall, with gray hair, and sunken eyes. She was dressed in a coarse and well-worn dress, and an equally well-worn bonnet, and carried a lighted lantern in one hand, and a stout hickory cane in the other.

Her companion was a well-built lad of sixteen, with a good-natured face, bright eyes, and a mouth of waggish expression.

As the two reached Da Costa's side, they paused in astonishment.

"Hey! what's this?" the woman cried. "A man covered with blood? Foul play has been done, here. Quick, boy, run back to the fourth door to the right, and tell the Jones men to come here at once!"

The boy hurried away, but soon returned, accompanied by two burly but not ill-looking men.

"Hello, Mercedes, what's this?" one man asked.

"There's been another assault," was the reply. "The poor man has been knocked on the head, and his left arm appears to be broken."

"Is he dead?"

"No! he has only fainted. Pick him up and carry him into your house, and we will see what we can do for him."

The Jones brothers were kind-hearted laboring men, of a far better class than the other inhabitants of St. Mary street, and they at once complied with Mercedes's request.

Da Costa was tenderly carried into the scantily furnished front room of a neighboring house, and laid upon a lounge, and then the two began

to make an examination of his injuries. This they were capable of doing, as both had been hospital nurses in the late war.

"Is he seriously hurt?" Mercedes asked, with seeming anxiety.

"Oh! no," Sam Jones, the elder brother, replied. "He's got a pretty bad scalp wound, but his skull is not fractured. His arm will be easy to set, and he has no other injury of any account. We'll have him comfortable in a jiffy. We'll set his arm while he is in a faint, and then the worst is over."

While the brothers are at work, we may as well add that the boy companion of old Mercedes was none other than the young New York sleuth, Rats.

During the day he had hunted up his mother and made known to her who he was. He had rather expected to find her a raving maniac, but was agreeably disappointed.

At sight of him, and the sound of his voice, she recognized him, and the cloud that had so long encompassed her mind, seemed to lift like a fog after an April shower.

No longer could she rightfully be called Crazy Mercedes, and she at once announced her intention of giving up the life of rag-picker.

She had laid aside a snug little sum of money, she said, and her only future hope was to live with her two children, and see them grow up to an honorable and prosperous life.

The Jones Brothers proved that they were no mean surgeons, for in a surprisingly short time they had Da Costa's arm correctly set, and in splints and sling.

The operators brought the patient to his senses, but he stood the pain of setting the limb and dressing the scalp-wound with good nerve, and afterward, when he had partaken of a stimulant, announced that he felt comparatively comfortable.

"Well, stranger, we've did what we could for ye," Sam Jones said, "an' I reckon ye could 'a' got no better treatment if you had went to a hospital. We're poor folks, but if ye can get along with what we've got, ye'r welcome."

"Thank you. I am very grateful for your kindness, and will pay you well for what time I may have to stay here," Da Costa replied. "I hope to be about in a couple of days."

"D'ye know who slugged ye?"

"Yes, I know, but prefer to say nothing about the matter until I get a chance to lay the affair before the police."

"I s'pose, then, yer don't want'er give your name. Ours is Jones—Sam and Bill."

"Oh, I've no objections to giving my name, sir. It is Da Costa—Colonel Delos Da Costa, formerly of this city, but latterly of Australia."

At the utterance of these words there was a piercing scream, and the next instant Mercedes had flung herself upon her knees beside the couch, and seizing his uninjured right hand, covered it with kisses.

"Delos, Delos! my husband, whom I have so long mourned as dead!" she sobbed.

"Good God! can it be possible, or am I dreaming?" the colonel cried, sitting bolt upright on the lounge. "Mercedes, this is not you—you, my wife, and in all these rags!"

"Yes, it is I, but oh, so changed by sorrow and poverty. Oh! I know you will turn from me in disgust at my helpless condition, but I loved you, and could not restrain my feelings."

"He'd better not turn from you, mom," cried Rats, energetically; "but if he does I kin support you."

"My God! is that my son, Royal, Mercedes?"

"That's about the size of the diorama," Rats quickly responded, "tho' I'm blowed if I know whether I'm particular 'round o' the fac' or not. Any husband as will go galivantin' round the country, an' leave his wife and young-uns to hoe their own row, I don't think much of, 'specially when he wills all his boodle to other folks!"

"Royal, Royal!" cried Mercedes, imploringly.

"What does the boy mean?" demanded the colonel.

"He refers to your making your will in favor of Hoyt Hylton, my brother, and leaving my children and myself destitute," Mercedes replied.

"Make my will in favor of Hoyt Hylton?" ejaculated Da Costa, in astonishment. "Good heavens! woman, are you crazy?"

"Not at all. Do you mean to say that you did not make such a will, Delos?"

"Most assuredly not; why should I?"

"Then, it is as I have believed, all along. The will was a forgery. Just before you were to start for home, dear, you were taken sick, in Melbourne?"

"Yes! yes!"

"You had as an attendant, a man called Higgins?"

"Yes, Hutch Higgins. He was my traveling companion throughout South Africa and Australia."

"While sick in Melbourne, your life was despaired of, was it not?"

"It was."

"And you made your will, and gave it to Higgins to bring to America, in case you should not survive."

"I did."

"Well, Higgins brought the will to America, after you had, as he reported, died on ship-board. When he arrived in San Francisco, he sent a letter to me, announcing his arrival and your death; also a letter to Hoyt. I never knew what was in that, but Hoyt went away, and when he returned, Hutch Higgins came with him."

"The will was opened and read, and by its terms Hoyt Hylton was made sole legatee of the diamonds, and such money as you had on your person, at the time of your death."

"Well, the blow was so great that I went crazy, and was put in an asylum. I did not remain there long, however, for mine was only a mild case of derangement, and as there was no one to pay for my keeping, I was released."

"But my mind was blank, so far as the past was concerned. To keep from starving, I drifted into business as a rag-picker, and that has been my vocation since. It was not until to-day, when I met my boy for the first in several years, that the cloud lifted from my mind, and the past became perfectly clear."

Colonel Da Costa had listened without interruption, but his bosom heaved with emotion.

"Thank God! it is no worse!" he said, reverently. "Through His divine agency, my dear wife and son, I have been restored you, and as soon as I am strong enough, shall take steps to obtain redress for the wrongs you have suffered. So Hoyt Hylton conspired to defraud you out of the diamonds, through the agency of a forged will, eh?"

"It appears so."

"But, why did you give them up?"

"I never had possession of them. You remember you sent them in his care. When he got possession of them, after he had paid the duty on them, he refused to surrender them to me, until you arrived in America, to settle with him for the duty!"

"Ah! the villain! Wait till I'm able to be around, and I'll make him sweat for his wickedness. Higgins and he must have been conspiring together, ere the latter left Australia."

"Yes, it would appear so. But, dear husband, you have not told me of yourself, after leaving Higgins."

"True. In listening to your wrongs, I had nearly forgotten my own. There really is but little to tell. I was put ashore one night on one of the Solomon Islands and there abandoned, but, being kindly cared for by the natives I soon quite regained my health, and then made my way back again to Melbourne, from whence I soon sailed by ship to Philadelphia where I arrived only two days ago."

CHAPTER XIII.

HIGGINS IN LIMBO.

LEAVING the vicinity of St. Mary street, Dick made his way as rapidly as possible toward the residence of Hylton; but, despite his haste, it was considerably after midnight ere he reached his destination.

Mounting the steps he rung the door-bell, and was admitted by the colored servant.

Instead of proceeding to the study, he rapped on the door of Hylton's room, and the summons was answered by Haidee.

"Oh, is it you, Mr. Bristol?" she said. "I am so glad you have come. We were wondering where you were."

"I was unavoidably detained down-town," Dick replied, as he entered the sick-room. "No trouble yet, I hope!"

"Trouble enough!" growled Hylton, from the bed. "There's a man in the study whom I want you to take into custody."

"A man, eh? Who is he?"

"A low-bred scoundrel named Higgins. He came to me during the afternoon and attempted to blackmail me. He threatened, if I didn't pay him five thousand dollars, he and his pals would accuse me of murder and swear my life away."

"Well?"

"So I pretended to be very much frightened, and promised him that if he would call again at six, when my daughter would be home, she

would get the money for him. This appeared to satisfy him, and he went off. But he returned at six o'clock."

"In the mean time, I had made arrangements, and when he entered this room he fell into the hands of three of my men-servants, who quickly made him a prisoner. He is in the study, bound hand and foot."

"Why didn't you turn him over to the police?" Dick demanded.

"I was going to do so, but he let drop a remark, after he was captured, that caused me to change my mind. He said he'd get even with me, even if I did get a case against him, as his pals would make a beggar of me before the week was out. It occurred to me then that, perhaps, he was in some way connected with the burglar gang, and so I thought it best that you should see him."

"Quite right," Dick replied. "I will go in and have a talk with him."

Accordingly, he went into the study and closed the door after him.

The gas was lighted, and there, lying on the floor, bound hand and foot, the detective found Hutch Higgins!

The ruffian was writhing and endeavoring to burst his bonds.

He stopped, however, when he saw Dick.

"Ha! you cursed traitor! So it's you, is it?" he cried. "I knew you were a cursed spy from the first!"

"Did you? Well, I am sure you had no cause for such extraordinary reasoning," Dick replied, coolly. "If your leader recognized me as Pete Plummer, of Chicago, and let me into the secrets of The Faculty, it isn't my fault, is it, because he made a mistake?"

"Curse you! you're a detective! Fisk might have known it!"

"You should not blame your estimable captain for a little oversight like that, Higgins, when you have been playing traitor, yourself, in trying to get a slice of the boodle in yonder safe, ahead of the others. Yes, I am a detective, and never saw or heard of Pete Plummer, until a few days ago. I took a contract to hunt down you burglars, and I have succeeded very well, so far. I've got you in my clutches, and it won't be long before I have the others!"

"Then you don't intend to let them get a whack at the safe?"

"Of course not. That proposition was simply to get them into a compromising position, when the police will pounce upon them, and run them in. The rest will be easy, and they'll get a job of breaking stones! You see, I've got it all cut and dried!"

Higgins uttered a savage meditation.

"I wouldn't want to be in your shoes!" he declared. "If the boys get sent up, you can bet they'll always remember you, and when they get free, they'll hunt you to the further corner of the earth, but what they'll kill you!"

"They'll not get free, very soon, and by that time I may already be six feet under ground!" Dick declared, grimly. "As for you, Higgins, there's a chance for you to escape punishment!"

"The deuce you say! What is it?" and the ruffian raised himself eagerly to a sitting posture. "If there's any show of escape let's hear it!"

"Well, in the first place, you must turn State's evidence!"

"I'm willin' to do that, you bet! But, who is it against?"

"Your pals, of course!"

Higgins looked dubious.

"I don't know 'bout that," he protested. "They'd make it hot for me, when they got free!"

"Oh! not necessarily. They'll get from five to ten years apiece, and if you can't make yourself scarce in that length of time, you ought to be mobbed."

"But, by turning State's evidence, would I be positively sure to get free?"

"Well, yes, pretty sure. At the most, you'd only get a very slight term of imprisonment, where, otherwise, if you don't squeal on your pals, you'll get the full dose. But, there's another thing you will have to do, too."

"What is that?"

Dick bent closer to him, and said, in a low tone:

"Swear against Hoyt Hylton, concerning the Da Costa case!"

Higgins started, violently.

"What do you know about that matter?" he demanded.

"I know all!" Dick replied. "I was in this room when you had the afternoon interview, and overheard every word. I was well-posted about the matter, even before that!"

"Are you going to arrest Hylton," Higgins demanded.

"Not until I see Da Costa. It shall be his say about that matter!"

"D'ye s'pose he'll push the case?"

"There's little doubt of that!"

"Then, I would stand a poor show, for he would be just as bitter toward me as against Hylton!"

"I can fix that all right."

"How can you?"

"Easy enough. Hylton was the greater villain of you two, because he defrauded his own sister and turned her out of doors. Naturally, the wronged man would most desire to be revenged upon him, and, revenged he shall surely be. But, I can fix it so you won't be troubled, in the least, if you do as I propose."

"Well, then, I'm your man. I suppose you will release me?"

"Oh! no, not until you are used as a witness. I shall have to keep you under guard, until then, but you will have a comfortable time of it, as you will be kept in a room in this house."

Dick then left the prisoner to himself, and returned to the sick room.

"Well?" Hylton demanded, interrogatively.

"Your surmise was right; Higgins is one of the burglars!"

"Ha! I thought so! What's to be done?"

"I have arrested him, and shall hold him in custody, until the rest of the gang is captured, when he will turn State's evidence against them."

"And get free?"

"Most likely!"

"That must not be!" Hylton cried, with venomous decision.

"Why not, pray?"

"Because, I mean to have him prosecuted for attempted blackmail!"

"That can be done, afterward!"

"No! no! It must be done first."

"I beg to differ with you. Higgins is my prisoner, and remains such until the proper time to use him. The interests of the people are greater than those of any single individual. Besides, you could not arrest Higgins for attempted blackmail, without a warrant. If you feel able to go before a justice and swear out a warrant, you can arrest him, and then it will be a question which case will be called first!"

Hylton winced, for he saw there was no use of arguing the point.

"Well! go your length!" he said, "but I shall have my lawyer attend to the case!"

"Very well. That's your best plan. By the way, I want a different room to keep the prisoner in, over night, and a safe man to stand guard over him, to prevent any possibility of escape!"

"Very well. There's a vacant room on the attic floor. Its only window is the sky-light, and the door is extra heavy. Lock your man in there, with a guard, and there is no danger of his escaping. Haidee, you call John."

While Haidee went to do the errand, Dick re-entered the study, and spoke a few words, in an undertone to Higgins, and by the time he had finished, John, the man-servant, appeared.

The bonds were then removed from the prisoner's feet, and he was conducted up-stairs to the attic-room, where, armed with a revolver, John took up his position as guard.

Dick then returned to Hylton's room.

By this time it was two o'clock in the morning.

"Your burglars don't seem to materialize," Hylton observed.

"Maybe they won't come, although I expect them before long."

"But, how do you expect to cope with them all, Mr. Bristol?"

"I do not intend to try to. I shall now station myself in yonder room; but, first, I want the burglar alarm shut off, so there will be no trouble in raising a window. Then, when I find the burglars are outside, I shall quickly raise the window and fire a pistol. This will be the tip for a number of officers to rush from where they are now in waiting, and the capture of the gang is inevitable."

"Your plan is a good one, and I certainly admire you for your nerve and wit," Hylton said, heartily.

"You wouldn't if you knew you were to fall a prey to them," Dick thought.

Dick then betook himself to the study, while Haidee went below stairs to have the electric current turned off.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CAPTURE—BRAVE HAIDEE.

ON entering the study Dick drew an easy-

chair to one of the windows, then extinguished the gas, and sat down to watch and wait.

After his eyes became accustomed to the gloom of the room, he could see quite plainly in the back yard, dark though it was.

"I half begin to fear the faculty won't come after all," Dick mused. "Maybe they have taken alarm at Higgins's disappearance. If so, that part of the game is knocked in the head. There will then be no alternative but to lead the police down on their rendezvous. Then, the chances are ten to one that none of the gang would be found."

At last the clock on the mantle chimed "three."

By this time Dick was getting pretty well tired of his monotonous vigil, and he was afraid the policemen would get disgusted and vacate the premises; but, just then, his vigilant eyes detected four skulking figures.

They came together, and appeared to be holding a consultation.

The time for action was at hand.

Drawing his revolver the detective cocked it and waited.

Directly, the burglars approached the window where Dick was stationed, and one of them tapped softly on the glass.

The next instant Dick had thrown up the sash, and thrusting out his weapon he fired into the air—once, twice, thrice, in rapid succession.

This greeting brought a volley of oaths from the burglars, and the stentorian cry of "Scatter, boys!"

But, following this cry, came another, in a chorus of commanding voices:

"Halt and surrender, or you're dead men!"

Then there was a rush, more yelling, and general confusion.

Dick closed the window, and leaving the study, made his way through the hall to the front door, which he opened just in time to see the prisoners brought around from the back lawn, each in charge of two burly policemen. Then came two other officers without a prisoner.

"Where's the fourth?" Dick demanded.

"There wasn't but three," was the reply.

"I know better," retorted Dick. "I saw four distinctly before I gave the alarm."

"Get out! you looked double! If there'd been four we'd 'a' gobbled 'em."

"Hold on! Let me see which three you've got."

Dick ran down the steps and gazed into the faces of the prisoners.

"Ike Hoon, Hen Galer, and Ham Hylton, eh? Fisk, the leader of the gang, has escaped you."

"Nonsense! I reckon we know our business, young man," growled the leader of the party. "Come along, boys, and let's proceed to jug our game."

"And claim the reward," suggested another.

"That's the ticket," added a third. "We'll live fat for the rest of the winter over this haul."

Then the party moved off.

Dick gazed after them a moment, grimly.

"I reckon if there's to be any rewards disbursed for this night's work, I'll be the principal claimant," he muttered.

Then he turned his attention toward the back yard.

It and all the surrounding neighborhood were all enveloped in gloom and silence.

Neither the pistol-shots nor the noise occasioned by the capture, apparently, had served to arouse the sleeping inmates of the neighboring houses.

There were but two ways of entrance to and egress from the back yard, viz: through the dwelling, and by way of the side yard.

"It's mighty queer," Dick thought. "I am positive there were four of the burglars. It stands to reason that Fisk would have accompanied the party."

It took several seconds of deliberation before he made up his mind just what to do.

"By Jove!" he decided at last. "I'm pretty sure Fisk could not have gotten past the policemen. He must be hiding back there now."

This conclusion formed, the detective drew his revolver, and stealthily made his way toward the back yard.

If Fisk was hiding there he meant to find and capture him, and thus triumph over the cops.

He knew there were several shrub-trees and bunches of bushes in the back yard, behind which any person could temporarily be concealed.

With the stealth of a cat, he stole along, eyes and ears on the alert.

When he reached the open stable door, he paused, peered in, and listened.

Only the breathing of the horses was to be heard.

He knew Don Da Costa was not there, for that young man, having been peremptorily discharged from Hylton's employ, had gone in search of his mother.

Dick was deliberating whether or not he had better venture into the stable, when he received a fearful blow upon the head that laid him out senseless upon the ground.

His assailant was indeed Captain Fisk, chief of the burglars, who had stolen upon him unawares and struck him with the butt of a heavy "bulldog" revolver.

"Ha! I reckon that settled him!" the villain muttered. "Unless his head is harder than a cobblestone, he'll never play the detective on me again. Now, then, for the boodle! I'll have it if I have to murder every inmate in the house. Once I get the boodle, America 'll know me no more!"

He hurried through the side yard to the front of the house, and, as expected, found that, on leaving the house, Dick had left the front door ajar.

Sitting down on the steps, Fisk took off his boots; then rising, he pushed open the door and entered the hall.

He seemed somewhat familiar with the house, for he advanced at once to the study door.

This stood about an inch ajar, and a bar of light streamed out into the hall.

Pausing, the burglar chieftain drew his revolver and listened.

Some one was moving about within the study.

Nerving himself, he pushed the door far enough open to admit his head.

What he saw gave him a thrill of exultation.

Haidee Hylton was kneeling in front of the great iron safe!

"Ha!" the villain thought. "She knows the combination, and she must open the safe for me. Now is my golden opportunity."

The next instant he glided into the room and "covered" the pretty maiden with his revolver.

"Sh! not the least outcry, or I will murder you!" he hissed, his eyes gleaming wickedly.

Haidee arose quickly to her feet.

"What do you want?" she demanded with remarkable nerve.

"I want the money and diamonds that are in that safe!" Fisk declared.

"You do, eh? Well, get them!"

"That's what I want you to do, for me. You know the combination, and you must unlock the safe!"

"Oh! must I?"

"You must, and you want to be mighty quick about it, too!"

"You don't say so! Well Mister Villain, I would not unlock that safe for you, or a dozen like you!"

"What! dare you defy me?"

"Yes, I dare!"

"Open that safe or I'll blow your brains all over this room! Do you hear? I will stand no trifling. Open that safe!"

"I won't! there now, you nasty thief!" and Haidee gave a toss of her head, and looked Fisk exultingly in the eyes, for she had now seen some one that the other had not suspected was a witness of the scene, and therefore was indeed, jubilant in her defiance.

The handsome captain of the burglars stared at the defiant girl in astonished admiration.

"Well, you're a cool one!" he finally said.

"But nothing shall deter me from my purpose—not even murder. Once more, and for the last time—will you open the safe?"

"No, she will not!"

It was not Haidee who spoke. The voice of the speaker was stern and emphatic.

At the same instant the cold muzzle of a revolver was pressed to the side of Fisk's head.

With an oath he looked around, to find himself gazing into the muzzle of the weapon held in the unwavering grasp of Deadwood Dick—Deadwood Dick whose face, hands, and clothing were besmeared with blood!

"Fisk, you're my prisoner!" the dauntless detective cried. "The State has more real use for you than your Faculty; so you will oblige me by dropping your revolver on the floor, and throwing up your hands."

"Oh, anything to accommodate you, of course!"

Fisk replied, sullenly, as he obeyed and dropped his weapon on the carpet.

"That is sensible. Now, Miss Hylton, you will find two straps in my coat pocket. Take one, and bind Captain Fisk's hands together, behind his back. Then bind his lower limbs together at the ankles."

Haidee obeyed with alacrity and in a few mo-

ments, the burglar chief was securely a prisoner.

One part of the work Dick had undertaken, was thus accomplished!

CHAPTER XVI. CONCLUSION.

THE next day following their capture, the four burglars were arraigned before a police justice at the Central Station, but the chief factor in their downfall—Deadwood Dick—being absent owing to illness, the prisoners were remanded back to jail, there to await the result of the daring detective's injuries.

Yes, Dick was sick—far sicker, too, than most people had any idea of.

The blow Fisk had given him was a terrible one, and that it had not resulted in immediate death is the marvel.

It was only a few minutes after Dick's capture of Fisk at the Hylton residence that the gallant detective fell to the floor in a spasm, and one followed another in rapid succession.

In terror, Haidee rung up a servant, and, contrary to her father's wishes, sent for the family physician.

Now that the burglars were safe in jail, and Hutch Higgins also a captive and at his mercy, Hylton seemed a changed man. He was not at all inclined to the notion of dying; he was once more the tyrant of yore, albeit he was yet liable to "kick the bucket."

"There's nothing more to fear from the burglars," he argued, "and Higgins is in a position where he can't blab; consequently, the only ones I have to fear are the detective and Delos Da Costa. If both were out of the way, I'd have no further trouble."

When the physician arrived, he managed to stop the spasms, but announced that Dick was bound to have a serious case of brain fever, and that his non-recovery was a thing to be looked for.

Then there was a confidential interview between Hylton and the physician, and the upshot of the matter was that an ambulance was ordered, and Dick was carted off to the University Hospital.

"For!" argued the wily Hylton, "he will stand a bigger chance of non-recovery there, where medical students have a chance to experiment, than elsewhere."

There was but one person who made a vigorous protest against this action, and that was Haidee, but her protest was disregarded, and Dick Bristol was trundled away.

And shortly after he was taken away she appeared before her parent, attired for a summary departure.

"Father," she said, "I have always been a kind and dutiful daughter to you, but things have come to my notice that have opened my eyes to the villainous methods you have for years been practicing—methods that under no extenuating circumstances can I countenance or overlook. You are aware I am betrothed to Donald, for whom you cherish intense hatred. As I love him truly, I shall go to him, and until you reform from your evil ways, you need no longer consider me your daughter."

"When my mother died, she left me five thousand dollars, and this I have taken from the safe as my rightful own. With this Donald and I can start in life, and as you still have a fortune to carry you through your miserable life, I have no compunctions about leaving you alone."

Then she took her leave, and Hoyt Hylton was left alone.

Days passed slowly by. Hylton grew stronger, and there was evidence of his ultimate recovery.

And Dick?

He was no longer at the hospital, but tenderly cared for at a pretty little West Philadelphia cottage, whose inmates, besides himself—and who gave him every attention—were Mr. and Mrs. Da Costa, Donald and his lovely wife, Haidee, and a very precocious young man nicknamed "Rats."

Dick was rapidly convalescing, but still in no condition to be up and about.

One day, he happened to overhear the following conversation, in the adjoining room:

"Yes, Hoyt Hylton is up and able to be around, and now I shall attend to his case!" It was Colonel Da Costa who spoke. "I have given him ample time to recover, and now he must return the diamonds or go to jail!"

"When will you see him, dear?" asked Mercedes.

"To-morrow. Hoyt Hylton and Hutch Higgins will be brought here, before being taken to

court, at ten o'clock to-morrow morning. If a satisfactory settlement is not then effected, Hylton will be handed over to the law-officers and Higgins detained as a witness in a criminal prosecution."

Promptly at ten o'clock the following day, two detectives brought Hylton and Higgins to the new home of the Da Costas, and ushered them into the parlor where the family group were assembled.

Higgins appeared good-humored and unperturbed, but not so with Hylton, whose face grew pale as death when he was confronted by the man he had wronged, and his own sister, whom he had so heartlessly robbed and turned from his door.

His eyes had a wild, frightened look, and in spite of himself he trembled in every limb.

"Hylton," Colonel Da Costa said, "the hour has arrived when you and I must have a final settlement. I have put off this matter longer than I should have done, in order to give you a chance to, in a measure, regain your health. But, now that you are able to be up and around, what do you think ought to be done with you?"

"Oh! I don't know," Hylton replied, with a feeble attempt at coolness. "I am not aware that you can do anything!"

"I can prove all, everything!" the colonel declared. "There is no use of my going to the trouble of rehearsing the infamous wrongs you have done me and mine. You know them—we all know them—others know them. Not only did your scheming almost wreck my wife and myself, but it has aged us beyond our years; not only did it rob us of our rights, but it separated us for years and caused us intense suffering. Do you think any mercy ought to be shown such a despicable wretch as you have proven yourself?"

"Certainly. All flesh is weak; all humans prone to sin!"

"Pah, you despicable wretch! How I despise and detest you. But, as you have heaped disgrace enough on your beautiful daughter, who is now my son's wife, I am not inclined to add to this disgrace, by putting you in State's Prison, which I can easily do. As much as I loathe and hate you, I am willing to be lenient, for Haidee's sake, in case we can come to terms!"

A gleam of hope entered Hylton's eyes.

"Terms, eh? What terms?"

"First, that you restore to me the diamonds stolen from my wife; secondly, that you deed over all your real estate and personal property, money excepted, to your daughter; thirdly, that you then leave this city, never to return. The acceptance of these terms, alone, will keep you out of State Prison!"

Hylton was eager, nervous, despairing.

"Da Costa!" he said, "you are inclined to be more lenient than I had any reason to expect. The latter two of your terms, I can, and will be only too glad to accept. As for the diamonds, I cannot give them to you!"

"You cannot? And why, pray?"

"Because, they are not in my possession!"

"Don't lie to me!"

"As I hope to be forgiven of my sins, I am telling you the honest truth! When I was able to leave my sick bed, and go to my safe, the diamonds were not there!"

Colonel Da Costa's face grew stern.

"I will not believe you. Officers, do your duty! Lock the man up. We will see if prison fare won't change his tune!"

"God help me! I am telling the truth!" Hylton moaned. "Nothing but the truth! Had I the diamonds, I'd surrender them before I'd go to jail even for a day."

"Come, sir, you will have to accompany me!" the detective said.

"Hold!"

At this moment, Deadwood Dick, pale-faced but still handsome, stepped into the room.

"I can set this matter to rights," he said: "Hylton has not got the diamonds, but I have. I extracted them from his safe, prior to the attempted burglary. Here they are, colonel, just as I found them," and he handed the colonel a small package.

When it was examined, it was found that the jewels were indeed all there—every one of the precious gems!

Dear reader, it needs but a few more words to bring our story to a close.

Glad to escape imprisonment, Hylton ceded all his property to Haidee, and then, with what money he had left, which was no insignificant sum, he left Philadelphia, forever.

When the trial of the burglars came off, the evidence against them was so conclusive that

they each received a long sentence, but Higgins, who turned state's evidence and testified against them, was discharged.

Donald and Haidee moved into the Hylton residence, while Da Costa, senior, and wife, were contented in a less pretentious, but just as happy home.

Dick lingered several weeks in the Quaker City, and after receiving a satisfactory reward for his brilliant services, and a valuable medal, he started on westward, accompanied by the best wishes of all good people with whom he had come in contact.

"Rats" did not accompany him, but promised to join him again as soon as he had improved his education. He wanted to become better acquainted with his "dad" and "mom!" he said.

With his usual impetuosity, he was, in truth, all eagerness to fit himself for the new and promising position in life which Richard Bristol's nerve and true nobility of character had been the means of bestowing upon his faithful little *protege*.

"Dick—Mister Bristol!" he said, in the final parting at the Broad Street Station, "I'm goin' to shake off the street gamins an' do you proud, see if I don't!"

"I know you will, Rats, my boy!" and that was their adieu.

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